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Virtus in the Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas

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VIRTUS IN THE WRITINGS
OF SAINT THOMAS
AQUINAS

by
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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

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LIFE

John David Stagaman, S.J., was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on July 29, 1935. He was graduated from Saint Xavier High School, Cincinnati in June, 1953. In August, 1953, he entered the Society of Jesus at Milford, Ohio and was transferred to West Baden College, West Baden Springs, Indiana in August, 1957. Majoring in Latin, he received the Bachelor of Arts degree in June, 1958. He enrolled in the graduate school of Loyola University of Chicago that same month.

From September, 1960 until June, 1963, Father Stagaman taught English and mathematics at Saint Xavier High School, Cincinnati. He began his theological studies in June, 1963 at West Baden College which, in June, 1964, moved to North Aurora, Illinois and became Bellarmine School of Theology of Loyola University of Chicago. He was ordained a priest on June 9, 1966. Father Stagaman is currently completing his studies for a degree of Master of Arts in philosophy at this institution.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to study the usages of virtus in the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas and to discover, if possible, a central meaning. That Aquinas uses virtue in manifold senses is an obvious fact. For instance, he speaks of intellectual and moral virtues, habitual dispositions of mind and will.¹ Also he refers to both agent and possible intellect as virtues.² When he discusses the relationship between elements and the compound they form, he maintains that the former are virtually present in the latter.³ Certainly the word virtus is not being used in exactly the same manner for all the above usages. Yet is there a common thread which links all these uses together? The quest of such a community of meaning is the goal of this study.

The purpose of the present endeavor will be clarified by a brief statement of what it is not. It is not a study of the moral virtues in Saint Thomas; it will devote some attention to their investigation, but the specific nature of moral virtue is foreign

¹S.T., I-II, 57-58.

²C.G., II, 77, N. 1581, ed. Marietti

³De Mixt. Elem., 5.

to the present intentions. Nor will this paper examine the virtues of active and passive potencies in any more detail than is required to understand the general notion of virtue. The core meaning of virtus throughout all its usages is the objective.

It might be objected that the scope of the thesis is so general that its value is minimal. The value of this study is twofold. First, the discovery of a central meaning for virtus will cast abundant light on the particular usages of the term; and the importance of the particular usages in the writings of Saint Thomas is undeniable. Secondly, there is a general value to be derived from any study of the writings of Aquinas. An excellent way in which to come to know the mind of the Angelic Doctor is to study some specific concept in his work. In order to grasp fully the meaning of the particular notion, it is necessary to come to grips with the whole or at least a large portion of his philosophical system.

This study sets as its objective an understanding of virtus. Yet the attainment of such an understanding must be by a cumulative process. In the next chapter, attention will be directed to a text of primary importance in this study, the first article of the De Virtutibus in Communi. Then a number of passages parallel to the focal text will be examined. These passages will be studied in their historical order. Perhaps some genesis of the meaning of virtus in the mind of Saint Thomas will be observed, although this study will not specifically investigate the his-

torical development. After perusal of the central and parallel texts, it will be obvious that numerous meanings have not been treated. For example, virtus signifying angel is a frequent usage of the term by Saint Thomas.⁴ These additional uses will be discussed in a separate chapter. In a final chapter, the findings from the body of the thesis will be drawn together and some special questions raised in the course of development will be subjected to scrutiny.

This study labors under a peculiar difficulty. It is, in a sense, a first of its kind. Various studies have been made into the meaning of particular types of virtue,⁵ especially virtue in the moral sense. No studies, however, have sought a general meaning for all the usages of virtus. As a consequence, there can be little recourse to secondary sources for assistance.

The lack of direct commentary on the subject under examination can be remedied in three ways. First, Saint Thomas himself can be summoned to explain what he meant in a certain passage by what he wrote elsewhere. Secondly, a few of the studies on particular types of virtus will be useful. A number of articles are

⁴C.G., III, 80, n. 2556, ed. Marietti.

⁵Vernon J. Bourke, "The Role of Habitus in the Thomistic Metaphysics of Potency and Act," Essays in Thomism, Ed. Robert E. Brennan, O.P. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942), pp. 101-10 & 370-73; Luke J. Lindon, S.C.J., "The Significance of the Term Virtus Naturalis in the Moral Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas," Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, XXXI (1957), pp. 97-104; Henri Renard, S.J., "The Habits in the System of St. Thomas," Gregorianum, XXIX (1948), pp. 88-117.

available on particular passages which will be studied in detail.⁶
 Thirdly, a number of lexicons, in spite of the fact that they only catalogue the many uses of virtue and do not seek any general meaning, will facilitate this work.⁷

⁶Thomas Aquinas, Saint, Summa Theologica, Ed. Heinrich Maria Christman, O.P. (Salzburg: Anton Pustet, 1940), XI, pp. 530-32; Aquinas, The Virtues, Tr. John Patrick Reid, O.P. (Providence: Providence College Press, 1951), pp. ix-xxvii & 1-8; M. Pierrot, "Un article de S. Thomas sur la vertu," Bulletin Joseph Lotte, VI (1935), pp. 406-14.

⁷Roy J. Deferrari, A Latin-English Dictionary of St. Thomas Aquinas (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1960), pp. 1089-97; Deferrari & Sister M. Inviolata Barry, C.D.P., A Lexicon of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1948), pp. 1159-67; Ludwig Schutz, Thomas-Lexikon, 2nd ed. (New York: Musurgia Publishers, n.d.), pp. 852-65; Peter of Bergamo, O.P., In Opera Sancti Thomae Aquinatis seu Tabula Aurea Eximii Doctoris (Rome: Editiones Paulinae, n.d.), pp. 994-1005.

CHAPTER II

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CENTRAL TEXT: DE VIRTUTIBUS IN COMMUNI, 1

At the beginning of this discussion, some justification might be required for beginning with the De Virtutibus in Communi, article 1. It is, as indicated by the chapter heading, the central text in this discussion of virtus in the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas. At first, the reader might be inclined to think that the title, De Virtutibus in Communi, is sufficient justification in itself. The title could be interpreted as signifying that this disputed question is an attempt on the part of Aquinas to collect into one treatise the manifold usages of virtus and to explore what community exists among them.

Such, however, is not the case. As will appear, the De Virtutibus in Communi is a discussion by Saint Thomas of the community among not all the usages of virtus, but of one particular type, virtus as habitus. Why then should this disputed question be of interest to a discussion of the central notion of virtus? In the first article of the question, Saint Thomas renders probably his clearest exposition of a central meaning for the term virtus and gives his most extensive classification of the various types of virtues. Research on virtus in the writings of Saint Thomas has, therefore, revealed this article to be the most suit-

able point of reference in the discussion.

In order to situate the reader in the context of the article under consideration, it will be helpful to state in general how the De Virtutibus in Communi develops. Father Patrick Reid gives the following outline of the question.¹ The first two articles concern the nature of virtue. Articles 3-7 explore the subjects of virtue. In articles 8-10, the analysis shifts to the efficient cause of virtue. The final three articles, 11-13, treat of the properties and distinction of virtues. As mentioned above, the subject matter of the question encompasses the usages of virtus as habitus, such as the intellectual, moral, and theological virtues. It treats the central definition and the principal usages of virtus only as preliminary to its study of the virtues which are habits.

The subject of the present chapter is the first article of De Virtutibus in Communi or the first half of Aquinas's discussion of the nature of virtue. The following article is a commentary on a definition of virtue by St. Augustine. It is not of importance to this discussion.

Besides the general development, another point should be noted. The De Virtutibus in Communi is a late work of Saint Thomas. Its exact dates are not of critical importance in this discussion, but it can be safely placed among his writings between

¹Thomas Aquinas, Saint, The Virtues, trans. John Patrick Reid, O.P. (Providence: Providence College Press, 1951), p. xxix.

1269 and 1272.² It represents a work of the mature Thomas and, along with the parallel passages in the Summa, constitutes a much clearer exposition of virtus than can be found in the earlier works.

Before formal study of the text, it will be helpful to explain the methodology here employed. The general procedure will be to present passages from the first article of the De Virtutibus in Communi and in a few paragraphs to attempt an explication of the text. In one instance, it will be necessary to interrupt the general procedure to investigate the meaning of an important definition of virtus given by Saint Thomas. The guide, however, in this investigation will be Saint Thomas himself by means of further texts to which he refers the reader of the De Virtutibus in Communi, 1. Also in commenting on a classification of the virtues given in the article, the work of Vernon Bourke on the same subject will be of assistance.³ At the close of the chapter,

²"Critical authorities disagree to some extent as regards the date of composition of these five Questions on the virtues /De Virtutibus in Communi, De Caritate, De Correctione Fraternali, De Spe, and De Virtutibus Cardinalibus/. They are, at best, unanimous in assigning all five to St. Thomas's second stay in Paris, between the years 1269-72. Synave and Grabmann indicate this three year period as the time of composition. Pere Mandonnet narrows the span to the years 1270-1272. Finally, Van Steenberghe and others would date these Questions some time after the De Malo, which they hold was written during the years 1271-1272. We are content, for present purposes, to accept the date more commonly agreed on, 1269-1272, when St. Thomas taught at Paris for the second time." Ibid., p. xvi.

³Bourke, pp. 101-109.

there will be a brief review of the tentative conclusions which this article contributes to an understanding of the term virtus in the writings of Saint Thomas plus some questions which should guide the discussion in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

The title of the De Virtutibus in Communi, 1 is "Utrum Virtutes Sint Habitus." It should be noted that virtutes in this context refers to the intellectual, moral, and theological virtues. In the body of the article, Saint Thomas admits that there are valid usages of the term virtus which do not signify habits, yet replies to the original question of the article in the affirmative. He would be contradicting himself unless, in posing the question, he understood virtutes to refer only to the intellectual, moral, and theological virtues.

The body of article 1, which is the subject matter for this chapter, is divided into three parts. The first section treats of the definitions of virtue, some nominal, and others essential. In the second section, virtues are classified according to the various types of operative potencies. Finally, in a concluding section, a determination is made that virtues are habits. The general movement of the passage is from the notion of virtus in general to one particular usage. Since the first two sections concern the general notion of virtus, they will be of primary importance in the present chapter.

At the beginning of the corpus, Saint Thomas explains the nominal definition of virtus:

Virtus, secundum sui nominis rationem, potentiae complementum designat; unde et vis dicitur, secundum quod res aliqua per potestatem completam quam habet, potest sequi suum impetum vel motum. Virtus enim, secundum suum nomen, potestatis perfectionem demonstrat; unde Philosophus dicit in I Caeli et Mundi, quod virtus est ultimum in re de potentia.⁴

Virtus has two nominal definitions. The first is "potentiae complementum" or "fulfillment of a potency." For this reason, it is called a vis since vis designates a power complete to the extent that it enables its possessor to act of its own initiative. The second nominal definition of virtus is "potestatis perfectio" or "actuation of a power." Aristotle referred to this when he said that virtus was the "ultimum in re de potentia" or the "limit of a thing's power" in the first book of the De Caelo.⁵ A thing is limited in its activity in so far as the activation of the power by which it acts is limited.

From the nominal definition, Saint Thomas proceeds to the essential definition of the term:

Quia vero potentia ad actum dicitur, complementum potentiae attenditur penes hoc quod completam operationem suscipit. Quia vero operatio est finis operantis, cum omnis res, secundum Philosophum in I Caeli et Mundi, sit propter suam operationem, sicut propter finem proximum; unumquodque est bonum, secundum quod habet completum ordinem ad suum finem. Inde est quod virtus bonum facit habentem, et opus ejus reddit bonum, ut dicitur in II Ethic.; et per hunc etiam modum patet quod est dispositio perfecti ad optimum, ut dicitur in VII Metaph.⁶

⁴De Vir. in Com., 1 c; the reference to Aristotle within the quotation is: De Cael., I, 11, 281a, 15.

⁵De Cael., I, 11, 281a, 15.

⁶De Vir. in Com., 1 c; the references to Aristotle within

The structure of the argumentation is as follows: since potencies are designated according to their acts, the fulfillment of a potency signifies the capability to undertake an operation in its fullness; since operation is the purpose of the operant and everything possesses its peculiar type of operation as its proximate end, a thing may be said to be good inasmuch as it is totally ordered to that end; coupling these two notions, that a thing is good in so far as it is ordered to its end and that virtue orders a thing to its proximate end, Saint Thomas formulates two definitions of virtue: (1) it is what "bonum facit habentem et opus ejus reddit bonum" and (2) it is a "dispositio perfecti ad optimum."

The first definition, "makes the possessor good and renders its activity good," specifies the effects that virtue achieves in its subject. The second definition states directly what virtus is. As a consequence, it will be of greater importance to this study.

At this point, the essential definition of virtus as dispositio perfecti ad optimum must be examined in detail. It will probably facilitate understanding to examine the terms severally. Three terms are significant: dispositio, perfecti, and optimum. Although a complete understanding of these terms is not to be expected at this point, some grasp is necessary for the subsequent

the quotation are the following: De Cael., II, 3, 286a, 3; Nic. Eth., II, 6, 1106a, 15; Phys., VI, 3, 246b, 2.

development of this thesis. Within the scope of Article 1 of De Virtutibus in Communi, some explanation can be found, and that is the object of the present endeavor.

In the reply to the ninth difficulty of Article 1, Saint Thomas explains what he means by dispositio:

Dispositio dicitur tribus modis. Uno modo per quam materia disponitur ad formae receptionem, sicut calor est dispositio ad formam ignis. Alio modo per quam aliquod agens disponitur ad agendum, sicut velocitas est dispositio ad cursum. Tertio modo dispositio dicitur ipsa ordinatio aliquorum ad invicem; et hoc modo dispositio ab Augustino sumitur. Dispositio vero contra habitum dividitur primo modo; ipsa vero virtus, dispositio est secundo modo.⁷

Dispositio is used in the second sense as "per quam agens disponitur ad agendum." Virtus is a dispositio because it is that by which a thing is readied for activity. Yet, what is that by means of which a thing acts? It is a form. Thus the dispositio is a formal determination of an agent in order that it may act.

What does the perfecti add to the definition? Since the phrase is dispositio perfecti, the reasonable conclusion would be that perfecti refers to the subject of the formal determination. Perfectus ordinarily means that which has act, and perfecti here designates what has been actuated by the dispositio. In the body of the first article of De Virtutibus in Communi, Saint Thomas referred to the following passage from the seventh book of his Commentary on the Physics,⁸ as the source of his definition of

⁷De Vir. in Com., 1 ad 9.

⁸The quotation above (p. 9, cit. 6), from the eighth Marietti edition, reads "VII Metaph." This reading is clearly incor-

virtus as dispositio perfecti ad optimum. In that passage, Saint Thomas explains more amply the meaning of perfecti:

Quia tunc est aliquid maxime secundum naturam, quando naturae virtutem habet; virtus enim naturae est signum completionis naturae: cum autem aliquid habet complete suam naturam, tunc dicitur esse perfectum. Quod non solum in rebus naturalibus verum est, sed etiam in mathematicis, ut eorum forma accipiatur pro eorum natura: tunc enim maxime circulus est, idest perfectus circulus, quando maxime est secundum naturam, idest quando habet perfectionem suae formae.

Sic ergo patet, quod cum ad perfectionem formae, cuiuslibet rei consequatur virtus ejus, quod tunc unumquodque perfectum est, quando habet suam virtutem. Et ita sequitur quod virtus sit perfectio quaedam.⁹

Virtus, it is argued, is the sign of a complete nature. Whatever has a complete nature is perfect. Thus that which possesses virtus may be said to be perfect. Thus the term perfecti in the definition refers to a nature or power which is complete or, it might be added, formally determined by a dispositio.

Optimum, the remaining term in the definition, remains to be explained. In the following passage, which is taken from the commentary on the Physics, and to which he referred in De Virtutibus in Communi, 1 c, Saint Thomas indicates what the optimum in the definition signifies:

Hujusmodi enim sunt quaedam dispositiones ejus quod est perfectum in sua natura per comparisonem ad optimum, idest ad

rect. It should read "VII Phys." In the seventh Marietti edition, the error was corrected in a parenthesis immediately following the reference to the seventh book of the Metaphysics. Reid, in his translation of the treatise on the virtues in general, makes reference to the Physics.

⁹In VII Phys., 6, nn. 1860-61.

finem, qui est operatio. Sicut enim dictum est, ex hoc huiusmodi dispositiones virtutes dicuntur, quod bonum faciunt habentem, et opus ejus bonum reddunt. Dicuntur ergo huiusmodi dispositiones per relationem ad debitum opus, quod est optimum rei.

Nec oportet exponere optimum, aliquid extrinsecum, sicut quod est pulcherrimum aut sanissimum, ut Commentator exponit: accidit enim pulchritudini et sanitati relatio quae est ad extrinsecum optime dispositum; sed per se competit eis relatio quae est ad bonum opus.¹⁰

The first part of the passage is a review of the ground already covered. Virtutes are the dispositiones of whatever is perfectum in its nature by comparison to the optimum which is its natural end or operation. Thus the optimum refers to operation or second act. Optimum, as indicated in the final sentence of the first paragraph, is the debitum opus which is the "greatest good" the potency can acquire. In the next paragraph, Saint Thomas instructs his readers that optimum does not refer to anything extrinsic to the potency possessing virtue. The optimum does not designate a measure of goodness outside the subject. It designates rather something intrinsic to the subject potency, namely the fact that the potency is formally determined to a specific operation.

In review, then, what does dispositio perfecti ad optimum mean? The dispositio indicates what virtus directly signifies, viz., a formal determination. The perfecti represents the subject of this formal determination, an operative potency. The optimum is second act or the activity to which the potency by

¹⁰In VII Phys., 5, nn. 1853-54.

means of the formal determination attainr. Dispositio perfecti ad optimum may be translated as "the formal determination of an operative potency to its proper activity." Such is the central definition of virtus according to Saint Thomas Aquinas.

In the second section of the body of Article 1, Saint Thomas classifies the different types of virtus. This classification is of importance to this study since it reveals what usages of virtus Saint Thomas understands as derived from the general meaning of the term defined as dispositio perfecti ad optimum.¹¹

The division of virtus into its various types is, Saint Thomas states, "secundum autem diversam conditionem potentiarum."¹² There are three types of operative potencies: totally active, purely passive, and partially active, partially passive. According to these three types of potencies, there are three types of virtus.

The first type of virtus is that of the totally active potencies:

Potentia igitur quae est tantum agens, non indiget, ad hoc quod sit principium actus, aliquo inducto; unde virtus talis potentiae nihil est aliud quam ipsa potentia. Talis autem potentia est divina, intellectus agens, et potentiae naturales; unde harum potentiarum virtutes non sunt aliqui habitus, sed ipsae potentiae in seipsis completae.¹³

¹¹Of some assistance in the subsequent analyses of text will be the work of Vernon Bourke on this subject.

¹²De Vir. in Com., 1 c.

¹³Ibid.

In the active potencies, the virtus is "ipsa potentia in se ipsa completa." The potency itself is a virtue. Of its very nature it is formally determined to its proper activity. Examples of such potencies are the divine power, the agent intellect, and the natural potencies. None of these require an efficient cause in order to act. Of themselves they are fully determined to achieve their operation without efficient causality on the part of their objects.¹⁴

A second type of virtus can be found among the purely passive potencies:

Illae vero potentiae sunt tantum actae quae non agunt nisi aliis motae; nec est in eis agere vel non agere, sed secundum impetum virtutis moventis agunt; et tales sunt vires sensitivae secundum se consideratae; unde in III Ethic. dicitur, quod sensus nullius actus est principium: et hae potentiae perficiuntur ad suos actus per aliquid superinductum; quod tamen non inest eis sicut aliqua forma manens in subjecto, sed solum per modum passionis, sicut species in pupilla. Unde nec harum potentiarum virtutes sunt habitus, sed magis ipsae potentiae, secundum quod sunt actu passae a suis activis.¹⁵

The type of potency here illustrated does not act of its own power but only under the influence of an efficient cause. Exam-

¹⁴"He begins by describing three different kinds of operative potencies. The first is wholly active in its original state; it requires, and can have, nothing added to it to bring it to the apex of its power. It is a virtus because its potency is metaphysically complete within its species. Examples of this type of wholly active potency are: the divine potency, the agent intellect, and physical forces. There can be no question of the development of habitus in these potencies, because they are metaphysically perfect in their original conditions." Bourke, p. 104.

¹⁵De Vir. in Com., 1 c; the reference to Aristotle within the quotation is: Nic. Eth., VI, 2, 1139a, 20.

ples of such potencies are the sense powers. The faculty of sight, for instance, does not operate except when stimulated to do so by its proper object or efficient cause, color.

In such potencies, what constitutes their virtus? Even though sense powers are purely passive potencies, their activity is immanent. Thus although they require an efficient cause to act, the activity must also be explained intrinsically. The intrinsic explanation of sense activity is the virtus or formal determination to a specific act of sensing. This is what Saint Thomas strives to point out when he says that the virtus of these purely passive potencies is "ipsa potentia actu passa a suis activis." The virtus is "the potency itself while actually being determined by the objects to act." This is the second type of virtus: the formal determination of a purely passive potency to its present operation.¹⁶

The third type of virtus is described by Saint Thomas in the following passage:

Potentiae vero illae sunt agentes et actae quae ita moventur

¹⁶"A second kind of operative potency is wholly passive; it does not act unless actuated by an active potency. This sort of passive potency is perfected for the action proper to it by the advent of a quality which is present only during the time of actual operation. This quality is called a passion and it does not belong to the same species of quality as habitus. Since these passions do not remain in the passive potency after the actual operation has ceased, there is no possibility of metaphysical development in these wholly passive potencies. The sense powers (considered simply in themselves without rational control) belong to this second type of wholly passive potency, in which no habitus formation is found." Bourke, p. 104.

a suis activis, quod tamen per eas non determinantur ad unum; sed in eis est agere, sicut vires aliquo modo rationales; et hae potentiae complentur ad agendum per aliquid superinductum, quod non est in eis per modum passionis tantum, sed per modum formae quiescentis, et manentis in subiecto; ita tamen quod per eas non de necessitate potentia ad unum cogatur; quia sic potentia non esset domina sui actus. Harum potentiarum virtutes non sunt ipsae potentiae; neque passiones, sicut est in sensitivis potentiis; neque qualitates de necessitate agentes, sicut sunt qualitates rerum naturalium; sed sunt habitus, secundum quos potest quis agere cum voluerit ut dicit Commentator in III de Anima. Et Augustinus in lib. de Bono Conjugali dicit, quod habitus est quo quis agit, cum tempus affuerit.¹⁷

Potencies of the third type are the habituated potencies. They are partially passive. To act they require an efficient cause. They are also partially active. The complete explanation of their activity, however, is not the efficient cause alone. For example, the possible intellect can be a habituated potency. To explain an act of knowledge, recourse must be had to efficient causes, the agent intellect and a phantasm. To explain fully, however, human understanding, consideration must be given all its factors, among them the familiar phenomenon that new knowledge is assimilated to the old. This phenomenon shows that the possible intellect is partially active in its operation, inasmuch as previously acquired knowledge determines the reception of the new. To explain why these powers assimilate the new according to the old

¹⁷De Vir. in Com., l c; the references to Averroes and Augustine within the quotation are the following: Averroes, Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis De Anima Libros, ed. F. Stuart Crawford, (Corpus Commentariorum Averrois in Aristotelem, Vol. VI) (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1953), p. 438; Augustin, Saint, Oeuvres de Saint Augustin, Vol. II: Problemes Moraux, ed. Gustave Combes (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer et Cie, 1948), p. 80.

requires something intrinsic. This something intrinsic which determines the operations, is the third type of virtus.

The virtus of the habituated potencies is the habit itself. It is a "forma manens in subiecto." Habits are formal determinations of an operative potency which, along with the efficient cause, determine the subsequent activity of the subject power.¹⁸

At this point in the first article of the De Virtutibus in Communi, Saint Thomas turns his attention to explaining in what sense virtues are habits. Since the article from this point onward (the question also) deals with some particular types of virtus, it is no longer of interest to this general study.

In retrospect, what has the analysis of the De Virtutibus in Communi, article 1, revealed for this study of the general notion of virtus in the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas? First, it has revealed a central definition: dispositio perfecti ad

¹⁸"It is only when we come to the third kind of operative potency that the possibility, and need, of habitus is found. These last potencies are a sort of metaphysical scandal; they are of a nature which seems to go beyond the limits of the simple theory of potency and act. They are at once active and passive, agentes et actae. It is true that they must be actuated by their corresponding active potencies, but this actuation does not, as in the case of wholly passive potencies, determine them to one, and only one, sort of operation. Even under the influence of active potency, these powers retain, within well-defined limits, their ability to control their own operations. What is produced in these potencies, under the actuation of active potency, is not merely a passion but a quality, of the nature of a form, which remains after the period of actuation has ceased. The rational powers of man are examples of potencies which can be thus metaphysically developed, or brought to the condition of virtus, by the growth of acquired qualities which are called habitus." Bourke, p. 104.

optimum. Virtus is "the formal determination of an operative potency to its proper activity." The dispositio indicates what virtus directly is, a formal determination. Perfecti indicates the subject of virtue, an operative potency which is perfected or receives first act by means of the dispositio. The optimum indicates the proper operation of the power, the second act which the dispositio enables the operative potency to perform.

Secondly, the analysis has revealed a classification of types of virtus by Saint Thomas. There are three types. There is the virtus of the active potencies such as the divine power, agent intellect, and the natural potencies. The virtus of such potencies consists in the powers themselves which are fully determined to act. The second type of virtus is found in the purely passive potencies such as sense faculties. The virtus of such potencies is the potency itself when actually being determined by its object to act. The final type of virtus is found in the habituated potencies such as will and intellect, acting under the influence of moral and intellectual habits. The virtus of such potencies is the habit which, along with the efficient cause, determines the power to act.

There are likewise some questions that remain for development. By questions for development is meant questions which should guide the inquiry of the remaining chapters of this thesis. They are questions raised during the examination of the De Virtutibus in Comuni, article 1, which should be answered if the

meaning of virtus in the writings of Saint Thomas is to be adequately grasped.

Regarding the central definition, two questions arise. First, is it actually a central definition? Since it is found in a treatise concerning the theological, intellectual, and moral virtues, is it perhaps a definition of virtus as habit rather than of virtus in general? Secondly, it was presumed that virtus and its definition can be restricted to operative potencies. In the further study of Saint Thomas's writings, however, will it appear that he uses the term virtus in connection with potencies which are not operative?

There were three important terms in the central definition of virtus: dispositio, perfecti, optimum. In the context of the De Virtutibus in Communi, article 1, an attempt was made to clarify the meaning of those terms. Subsequent inquiries should focus on further clarifying their meaning.

Three usages of virtus were indicated in the article studied: the virtus of active potencies, that of purely passive potencies, and that of habituated potencies. Are there other usages of virtus not mentioned in the central text and what are they? Are the usages mentioned here the most important and are there other important usages to be discovered?

A final question for development regards the context in which the central definition and these three usages were uncovered. They were found in a context of a discussion of the virtues

which are habits. Does this indicate a certain primacy in the mind of Saint Thomas to be attributed to the moral and intellectual virtues? Does this indicate that virtus as a habit is a sort of prime analogate and that all the other usages are secondary? Such are the principal questions raised by the study of the present chapter. It remains for the subsequent chapters to indicate the answers.

CHAPTER III

A STUDY OF PARALLEL TEXTS

This chapter will consist in a study of the parallel texts to De Virtutibus in Comuni, 1. There are five passages that form fairly close parallels for the central text of this discussion.¹ These are: the Summa Theologiae, I-II, 55, 1; the second book of the Commentary on the Sentences, 27, 1, 1; the third book of the same work, 23, 1, 3, sol. 1 and 3; the second book of the Commentary on the Ethics, lecture 5.

In this chapter, the parallel texts will be examined in their chronological order. The De Veritate, 14, 3 and Summa Theologiae, I-II, 71, 1 will also be studied, even though they are not exactly parallel, since they contain discussions important to an understanding of the general notion of virtus according to Saint Thomas.

The method employed will be the same as in the previous chapter. Passages from the writings of Aquinas will be cited and explicated, along with comments on their significance for the present study. The concluding paragraphs will consider how the questions for development posed in Chapter Two have been

¹As listed in Saint Thomas Aquinas, Quaestiones Disputatae, 8th ed. (Turin: Marietti, 1949), II, p. 707.

clarified in the present chapter. Likewise any further questions raised by this chapter will be treated.

The first three parallel texts, which will be studied as a unit, are from the Commentary on the Sentences. They constitute Saint Thomas's earliest expression² of his ideas on the general notion of virtus. The first text is found in Book II, Distinction 27, question 1, article 1. The general context of the article is a treatment of grace. The specific question of this article is "Utrum virtus sit habitus."

The solutio reads:

Cum effectus proportionetur suae causae, oportet actum potentiae rationalis ipsi potentiae proportionatum esse. In actu autem virtutis non solum consideratur substantia ipsius actus, sed etiam modus agendi: non enim qui casta operatur quocumque modo castus est, sed qui faciliter et delectabiliter Delectatio autem ex convenientia causatur, sicut et in sensibilibus patet quod conjunctio convenientis cum convenienti facit delectationem. Oportet ergo quod actus virtutis procedat a potentia adaptata et assimilata ad hunc actum. Hoc autem potentia rationalis non habet ex seipsa, cum sit ad utrumlibet. Oportet ergo aliquid potentiae superaddi, ut perfectionem ejus, per quod talem actum educat, undecumque causetur: et hoc dicimus esse habitum virtutis: et ideo dicit Philosophus . . . quod signum generati habitus oportet accipere fientem in opere delectationem. Hinc etiam est quod potentia perfecta per habitum virtutis tendit in actum consimilem per modum cujusdam naturae: propter quod dicit Tullius . . . quod virtus est habitus, modo naturae, rationi consentaneus; sicut enim gravitas deorsum tendit, ita castitas casta operatur. Hinc etiam est quod in natura completa, cujus potentia ad malum flecti non potest, non requiritur habitus quo mediante agat, quia ipsa potentia ex seipsa proportionata est ad actum perfectum.

²The Commentary on the Sentences was written between the years 1253 and 1255. Cf. Martin Grabmann, Thomas Aquinas, trans. Virgil Michel, O.S.B. (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1928), p. 21.

tum ut in Deo patet.³

The first assertion of this passage is that, just as every effect is proportioned to its cause, so every act of a rational potency must be proportioned to the power. In an act of virtue (here a rational act), however, two factors must be considered, the substance of the act and the manner in which it is placed. For example, the virtue of chastity does not consist merely in the positing of a chaste act (substance), but in the fact that it is placed with facility and delight (manner). Therefore, acts of human virtue cannot be explained exclusively in terms of the rational power, but require an additional explanation, a habit. Thus far the discussion has been confined to a particular type of virtus, human virtue.

In the final sentences of the solution, however, Saint Thomas points out a parallel between the human and "natural" virtues. An habituated rational power tends towards an act which is quasi-natural to it. For example, will of its nature is not disposed to any specific type of act. The habituated will, however, is inclined to specific acts which may be said to be quasi-natural to it. Natural potencies tend towards specific acts of their very nature. Since, by nature, they are determined to these acts, they do not require a habit in order to be virtues. The reply to

³In II Sent., 27, 1, 1 sol.; the references to Aristotle within the quotation are the following: Nic. Eth., I, 8, 1099a, 17-21; Ibid., II, 3, 1104b, 4; the reference to Cicero is: Cicero, De Inventione, II, 52, 159, ed. H.M. Hubbell (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1949), p. 327.

the second difficulty reiterates the concluding assertion of the solutio: "Potentiae naturales sunt determinatae ad suos actus ex seipsis; unde non indigent habitu determinante, sicut potentiae rationales, quae ad utrumlibet sunt."⁴ The tenor of these remarks is that a virtue is what determines an operative potency to specific types of operation.

In the reply to the third difficulty, an important idea is added:

Quidam dicunt quod virtutes habent quosdam actus qui continui sunt, nec in eis est interpolatio, quamvis a nobis non sentiatur: non enim virtutes posse otiosas esse aestimant. Sed actus est duplex: scilicet primus, ut esse est actus formae, et talis actus virtutis continuus est; manente enim castitate continue, manet esse castum; et actus secundus, qui est operatio, et hunc non contingit continuum esse; hic enim actus non tantum est virtutis, sed potentiae quam perficit; sicut nulla forma quae non est per se subsistens habet operationem praeter communicationem subjecti, nec contingit actum aliquem esse vel operationem ex libero arbitrio, et praecipue cum electione, sine qua virtutis actus esse non potest, quin a nobis percipiatur.⁵

The difficulty stems from an assertion that acts of virtue are continuous. Saint Thomas replies with a distinction: acts of virtue are continuous if considered formally; that is, while the virtue, e.g., chastity, remains present, the subject is virtuous, e.g., chaste, continually. If, however, acts of virtue are considered as operations, they are discontinuous. Thus virtues are considered as abiding dispositions of the potencies they inform,

⁴Ibid., 1, ad 2.

⁵Ibid., 1, ad 3.

and virtuous acts are considered as proceeding from both the virtue and the potency.

The other parallels in the Commentary on the Sentences are found in Book III, Distinction 23, question 1, article 3. The first subordinate query of article three takes up the problem "Videtur quod virtutes non sint habitus sed potentiae." In the solutio, the following answer is given:

Nomen virtutis, secundum sui primam impositionem videtur in quamdam violentiam sonare. Unde in III Caeli et Mundi . . . dicitur quod motus accidentalis, idest violentus, est qui est a virtute, idest a violentia, non cum auxilio naturae.

Sed quia non potest aliquid alteri violentiam inferre nisi per potentiam perfectam, secundum quam agat et non patiatur; inde tractum est nomen virtutis ad significandum omnem potentiam perfectam, sive qua potest aliquid in seipso subsistere, sive qua potest operari. Et sic dicitur in I Caeli et Mundi, quod virtus est ultimum potentiae, quia perfectio potentiae mensuratur ex ultimo et maximo quod quis potest.

Et quia malum in actu contingit ex defectu potentiae, exigitur quod bene operetur in genere suo. Et propter hoc dicitur in II Eth., . . . quod virtus est quae bonum facit habentem et opus ejus bonum reddit; et in VI Phys., . . . dicitur quod virtus est dispositio perfecti ad optimum, eorum scilicet ad quae potentia se extendit.

Et quia de virtutibus humanis loquimur; ideo virtus humana erit quae perficiet humanam potentiam ad actum bonum et optimum.⁶

This passage may be conveniently divided into four parts according to the separate paragraphs.

In the first paragraph, a nominal definition of virtus, no doubt based on a supposed etymological connection with vis, is

⁶In III Sent., 23, 1, 3, sol. 1; the references to Aristotle within the quotation are the following: De Cael., III, 2, 301b, 18; Ibid., I, 11, 281a, 7ff.; Nic. Eth., II, 5, 1106a, 15-16; Phys., VII, 3, 246b, 23.

given as violentia. Virtue and violence have this in common: they both produce change in the object acted upon without any help from the object so acted upon. Aristotle recognized this similarity between virtue and violence in his treatise on the heavens and the earth.

In the second paragraph, Saint Thomas penetrates further into the likeness between virtue and violence. Violence can only be actively inflicted by a perfected potency. Such a potency can be perfected in two ways, in the order of subsistence or in the order of operation. Accordingly the virtues are divided into those which perfect potencies to entitative act and those which perfect potencies to operation. A new category of virtue is introduced, the virtus of potency to being. This type of virtue lies outside the scope of the classification offered in the De Virtutibus in Communi, article 1,⁷ where virtus was restricted to operative potencies.

In the following paragraph, two essential definitions are derived. Because any defect in operation results from an inadequacy in the power, there is required something over and above the operative potency for it to act. Virtue perfects the potency and enables it to perform second acts. Thus virtue can be essentially defined alternately as "that which renders a subject good and its operation good" or "the disposition of a perfected power for what

⁷De Vir. in Com., 1 c.

is best in it." These two definitions are already familiar and have been explained elsewhere.⁸

In this same paragraph, Saint Thomas offers a different reason for the use of the word optimum. Virtue is opposed to defect; likewise the effects of each are opposed. A defect in an operative potency results in an evil; consequently, virtue must result in a good. The good in this case is an operative act fully in accord with the finality of the potency. The use of the superlative optimum is explained by the fact that the perfection of an operative potency is designated according to the maximum of which it is capable.

The first three paragraphs parallel the introductory sections of the corpus of the De Virtutibus in Communi, article 1. The argumentation begins with a nominal definition of virtus and then proceeds to an essential definition of the term. As in the central text, the definitions cited as essential are from Book II of the Ethics and from Book VI of the Physics.

In the final paragraph, however, Saint Thomas clearly indicates that he is making a transition from the notion of virtue in general to that of human virtue. He gives a definition of human virtus, "Quae perficiet humanam potentiam ad actum bonum et optimum." This definition is an application of dispositio perfecti ad optimum to a more particular realm and probably indicates a

⁸Cf. above pp. 8-13.

certain preference on his part for the definition from the Physics.

In his reply to the first difficulty, Saint Thomas adds a note which will aid an understanding of virtue as disposing to entitative act:

Potentia naturalis qua quis potest esse, est determinata ad unum, scilicet ad esse; ideo ipsius perfectio secundum ipsam naturam potentiae esse potest, et ideo ipsa potentia virtus dicitur.⁹

The natural potency which disposes something to existence is a determination to one thing, viz., esse. Since this disposition or perfection of its very nature belongs to the potency, the potency can be called a virtue. Thus potency to being is similar to the natural powers in being a virtue.

In the reply to the third difficulty, a distinction between virtus and vis is given: "Vis accipitur pro omni eo quod est principium operationis et non solum operationis perfectae, quod importat nomen virtutis."¹⁰ Thus vis is a wider term than virtus, inclusive of the latter. Vis signifies any principle of operation, while virtus is confined to principles of perfect operation.

The next parallel text is the third subordinate query of the same article. It is concerned with the problem, "Videtur quod virtutes non sint habitus sed actus." The solutio reads:

⁹In III Sent., 23, 1, 3, sol. 1 ad 1.

¹⁰Ibid., 1 ad 3.

Virtus proprie loquendo includit respectum ad aliquid cuius principium sit, sicut currendi vel essendi. Et quia actus, inquantum huiusmodi, cum sit ultimum, non ordinatur ad aliquid sicut principium sed magis sicut alicujus effectus; ideo actus virtus dici non potest nisi eo modo loquendi quo habitus per actus nominantur, sicut causae per effectus.¹¹

The principal sense of this passage is that virtues are not acts. Virtue includes a relationship to that for which it is a principle. Act, however, since it is final, can be ordered to another as an effect but never as a principle. Therefore, virtues are not acts except in the sense that principles are sometimes described in terms of their results.

In summary, then, what does the Commentary on the Sentences reveal about the mind of Saint Thomas on virtus? First, the definition, dispositio perfecti ad optimum, is explicitly stated in Book III, Distinction 23 and implicitly contained in the discussion of Book II, Distinction 27. It seems reasonable to assume at this point that it is the essential definition of the term. Secondly, in Distinction 23 a clear distinction is drawn between virtue in general and human virtue; and dispositio perfecti ad optimum was given as the definition of virtue in general. Thirdly, only the natural potencies and habits are used as examples of virtue; a fact which raises a question how important in Aquinas's mind the second category of the classification in the central text is. Finally, violentia was given as a synonym for virtus.

¹¹Ibid., sol. 3.

The next parallel is the fifth lecture of Book II of the Commentary on the Ethics. Among the parallel texts, it constitutes a middle point in Aquinas's development.¹² It is not very helpful to the present study of virtus in general.

Saint Thomas gives the framework of his discussion in the fifth lecture with the following words:

Ad perscrutandum quid est virtus, oportet assumere, quod tria sunt in anima, scilicet passiones, potentiae et habitus. Quorum alterum necesse est esse virtutem. Dixit enim [Aristoteles] supra quod virtus est principium quarundam operationum animae. Nihil autem est in anima, quod sit operationis principium, nisi aliquod horum trium.¹³

Aristotle considers three aspects of the soul: the passions, the powers, and the habits. One category must be identical with the virtues; for virtues are principles of operation, and these three constitute the only principles of operation in the soul.

The virtues are not passions:

Secundum virtutes dicimur boni, et secundum malitias oppositas dicimur mali. Sed secundum passiones absolute consideratas non dicimur boni vel mali. Ergo passiones neque sunt

¹²According to Grabmann the Commentary on the Ethics was written between the years 1261 and 1264. Cf. Martin Grabmann, Thomas Aquinas, trans. Virgil Michel, O.S.B. (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1928), p. 19. Variant opinions are: that the Commentary on the Ethics was written about 1260--Cf. Gerard Verbeke, "La date du commentaire sur l'ethique," Revue Philosophique de Louvain (1949), XLVII, p. 220; that it was written after the Prima Pars--Cf. A. Mansion, "La date du Commentaire de S. Thomas sur l'Ethique," Revue Philosophique de Louvain (1952), L, p. 471; that it was written during the years 1270-1271--Cf. A. Gauthier, O.P., "La date du commentaire sur l'Ethique," Recherches de Theologie Ancienne et Medievale (1951), XVIII, pp. 104-5.

¹³In II Eth., 5, n. 290.

virtutes neque malitiae.¹⁴

Nor are they potencies:

Nullus bonus vel malus dicitur, neque laudatur neque vituperatur ex hoc, quod potest pati secundum aliquam passionem, puta ex hoc quod potest irasci vel timere. Sed secundum virtutes et malitias dicimur boni vel mali, et laudamur vel vituperamur. Ergo virtutes et malitiae non sunt potestiae.¹⁵

They are habits:

Concludit propositum: quia scilicet si virtutes non sunt passiones neque potentiae, relinquitur quod sunt habitus secundum divisionem praemissam.¹⁶

The general argument is this: according to virtue and vice, men are praised or blamed; inasmuch as men have passions and express them, they are not praised or blamed; by a process of elimination, habits are the only principles of operation within the soul which can be virtues. Since this article is confined to human virtue, it is not of special significance for the present study.

The final parallel text to be discussed here is the first article of the fifty-fifth question in the Summa, Prima-Secundae.¹⁷ Directly the question concerns human virtue. Since, however, it approaches its subject through the more general notion of virtus, it is significant for the present study. It should be noted that the writing of the present text is closest in time to

¹⁴Ibid., n. 299.

¹⁵Ibid., n. 303.

¹⁶Ibid., n. 305.

¹⁷S.T., I-II, 55, 1 c.

the composition of De Virtutibus in Communi.¹⁸ A more mature viewpoint is evidenced by the clear argumentation of the article.

The corpus of the Summa Theologiae, I-II, 55, 1 reads:

Virtus nominat quandam potentiae perfectionem. Uniuscujusque autem perfectio praecipue consideratur in ordine ad suum finem. Finis autem potentiae actus est. Unde potentia dicitur esse perfecta, secundum quod determinatur ad suum actum.

Sunt autem quaedam potentiae quae secundum seipsas sunt determinatae ad suos actus; sicut potentiae naturales activae. Et ideo hujusmodi potentiae naturales secundum seipsas dicuntur virtutes.--Potentiae autem rationales, quae sunt propriae hominis, non sunt determinatae ad unum, sed se habent indeterminatae ad multa: determinantur autem ad actus per habitus, sicut ex supradictis patet. Et ideo virtutes humanae habitus sunt.¹⁹

As in the first article of the De Virtutibus in Communi, Saint Thomas begins with a nominal definition of virtue. "Virtus nominat . . . potentiae perfectionem." Virtus is the perfection of a potency.

From this notion, he argues to an essential definition of the term. Every perfection is understood according to its finality. The finality of potency is act. Thus, to say that a potency is perfect is to assert that it is determined to act. The notion of virtue as a determination of a potency to its act is

¹⁸Mandonnet's opinion was that the Prima-Secundae was written between the years 1269 and 1270; Grabmann maintained it was completed by March, 1266. Cf. Vernon J. Bourke, Thomistic Bibliography 1920-1940 (St. Louis: The Modern Schoolman, 1945), p. 13. Glorieux's opinion is identical with that of Mandonnet. Cf. P. Glorieux, "Pour la chronologie de la Somme," Melanges de Science Religieuse, (1945), II, p. 94.

¹⁹S.T., I-II, 55, 1 c.



equivalent to the already studied²⁰ essential definition of virtus as dispositio perfecti ad optimum.

In the second paragraph, a classification of virtues, alternative to that of the De Virtutibus in Communi, 1, is given. Two types are mentioned. The first type is the powers determined to act of their very nature. These are the "potentiae tantum activae" of the central text. Examples of these powers according to the Summa are the natural powers. The rational powers fall into the second category. By nature, they are not determined to any specific act. To be determined to a special operation, they require determination by habits. The second category of virtue here comes third in the classification of the central text.

The difference in classification results from a difference in principle. In the De Virtutibus in Communi the principle of classification is the activity or passivity of the powers. Such a principle yields three categories of virtue. The classificatory principle of the Prima-Secundae, 55, 1 is the determination of the powers to one or more than one act by nature. It is hardly surprising that such a principle yields only two categories. The classification of the De Virtutibus in Communi comprehends all categories of the classification in the Summa plus an additional type.

In his reply to the first difficulty, Saint Thomas states:

²⁰De Vir. in Com., 1 c.

Quandoque virtus dicitur id ad quod est virtus, scilicet vel objectum virtutis, vel actus ejus; sicut fides dicitur quandoque id quod creditur, quandoque vero ipsum credere, quandoque autem ipse habitus quo creditur. Unde quando dicitur quod virtus est ultimum potentiae, sumitur virtus pro objecto virtutis. Id enim in quod ultimo potentia potest, est id ad quod dicitur virtus rei: sicut si aliquis potest ferre centum libras et non plus, virtus ejus consideratur secundum centum libras, non autem secundum sexaginta. Objectio autem procedebat ac si essentialiter virtus esset ultimum potentiae.²¹

In answering the difficulty, Saint Thomas points out that virtus is sometimes used for the object or the act of virtue. For example, faith sometimes refers to what is believed, at other times to the act of belief, and sometimes to the habit by which we believe. Only the final usage properly conveys the notion of faith as a virtue. The difficulty proposed is adjudged invalid since it proceeds as if the term virtus were being used properly only when it is applied to the object of a virtuous act.

This passage is important for the following reason. Saint Thomas here recognizes two usages of virtus (as referring to the operative act and to its object) which do not reflect the essential meaning of the term. Thus it will not be surprising to find usages in his writings not conformable with the definition, dispositio perfecti ad optimum.

Relative to this passage, two items should be noted about the article which immediately follows it despite the fact that the subsequent article is not a parallel text. The first item is

²¹Is. T., I-II, 55, 1, ad 1.

in the third difficulty which begins: "Praeterea, Philosophus dicit . . . quod virtus est dispositio perfecti ad optimum."²²

In the difficulty, Aquinas mentions the essential definition only indirectly and attributes it to Aristotle. In his reply to the difficulty, however, he does not question the validity of the definition but only the accuracy of its interpretation by the supposed objector.²³

The first paragraph of the corpus is also worthy of attention:

²²Ibid., 2, ad 3.

²³The seventh Marietti edition contained an interesting footnote to this third difficulty: "Virtus dicitur esse dispositio perfecti ad optimum; quia est dispositio complens potentiam ad elicendum actum bonum, ac proinde cum dicitur ad optimum, illud optimum ex mente tum Philosophi (1. vii Phys.), tum B. Thomae (Ibid., lect. 5 et q. 14 De Verit., a. 3 ad 3) non intelligitur objectum, sed actus perfectus quem potentia per virtutem disposita potest elicere; et qui dici potest quid optimum, eo quod actus ab habitu procedens, sit aliquid melius quam habitus solus." /Saint Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I-II, ed. De Rubeis, Billuart, P. Foucher (Turin: Marietti, 1948), p. 247. In substance, this passage confirms what was said about the term optimum in the previous chapter; viz., that it refers to the operative act elicited from the potency in a certain manner, which manner can be explained only in terms of the virtue. The reason given by the editors for the use of the term optimum, "actus ab habitu procedens, sit aliquid melius quam habitus solus," is one of two reasons given by Saint Thomas. Another reason was uncovered during the investigation of another parallel text in the Commentary on the Sentences (in III Sent., 23, 1, 3, sol. 1, and cf. explanation above, p. 28). Regarding the three references to Thomistic texts, the passage from the Commentary on the Physics has already been analyzed in this thesis (cf. above, pp. 12-13), the body of the article from the De Veritate will be examined subsequently in this chapter (cf. below, pp. 38-40), and the reply to the third difficulty is doctrinally identical with the editor's comment above.

Virtus, ex ipsa ratione nominis, importat quandam perfectionem potentiae Unde, cum duplex sit potentia, scilicet potentia ad esse et potentia ad agere, utriusque potentiae perfectio virtus vocatur. Sed potentia ad esse se tenet ex parte materiae, quae est ens in potentia; potentia autem ad agere se tenet ex parte formae, quae est principium agendi, eo quod unumquodque agit in quantum est actu.²⁴

The body of this article, like the already examined passages, begins with a nominal definition of virtus, "the perfection of a potency." Then it is asserted that there are two types of potency, potency to being and potency to operation. The perfection of each is a virtue. This classification of the potencies and their virtues is different from the two classifications already encountered.

Before the examination of further texts, it will be profitable to summarize what the parallel from the Prima-Secundae has contributed to this study. Four conclusions are plausible. The definition from the central text, dispositio perfecti ad optimum, although stated only obliquely, appears to be an essential definition since the discussion of the essential meaning of virtue in the corpus of Question 55, Article 1 is equivalent to it. Two alternate classifications of virtue, one according to the number of acts towards which the subject potency is by nature ordered, the second according to the act, first or second, towards which the potency is ordered, are found, both of which are less comprehensive than the three categories of the central text. The sec-

²⁴S.T., I-II, 55, 2 c.

ond classification, however, introduces a type of virtue, the disposition of potency for being, which raises the question whether the term virtus can be restricted to operative potencies.

Finally, it should be noted that two additional non-essential meanings are encountered--virtue as act and as object; yet it should be remembered that both are improper uses of the term.

All the directly parallel texts of De Virtutibus in Communi have now been examined. There remain, however, two additional texts that are important to this study. The first is the De Veritate, Question, 14, Article 3.²⁵ The question posed at the beginning of this article is "Utrum fides sit virtus." Saint Thomas answers thus:

Virtus ex impositione sui nominis significat complementum activae potentiae. Activa autem potentia duplex est: quaedam quidem cujus actio terminatur ad aliquid actum extra, sicut in aedificatione actio terminatur ad aedificatum; quaedam vero est cujus actio non terminatur ad extra sed consistit in ipso agente ut visio in vidente

In his autem duabus potentiis diversimode sumitur complementum.

Quidam enim actus primarum potentiarum . . . non sunt in faciente, sed in facto: ideo complementum potentiae accipitur ibi penes id quod fit. Unde et virtus deferentis pondera dicitur esse in hoc quod maximum pondus defert . . . ; et similiter virtus aedificatoris in hoc quod facit domum optimam.

Sed quia alterius potentiae actus consistit in agente, non in aliquo actu, ideo complementum illius potentiae accipitur secundum modum agendi; ut scilicet debite et convenienter operetur, ex quo habet ejus actus ut bonus dica-

²⁵The Disputed Questions on Truth were written between the years 1256 and 1259. Cf. Vernon J. Bourke, in Saint Thomas Aquinas, Truth, trans. Robert W. Mulligan, S.J., James V. McGlynn, S.J., Robert W. Schmidt, S.J. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952), Introduction, I, p. xvii.

tur. Et inde est quod in hujusmodi potentiis virtus dicitur quae opus bonum reddit.²⁶

The passage begins with a nominal definition of virtus, "the fulfilment of an active potency." Active potency can have two meanings. First, there is the type of active potency which terminates in something extrinsic to the agent, e.g., that of building, which terminates in the thing built. Secondly, there is the type whose action is immanent, e.g., that of seeing, whose action is totally contained in the seer.

As the active potencies differ, so the fulfilment differs. In the case of a transient action, the fulfilment must be measured according to the effect produced. Thus the norm for housebuilding is a good house. In the case of immanent action, the fulfilment must be measured in terms of the operation within the agent. Thus the norm of seeing is good sight.

The significance of this text is twofold. First, it offers a third classification of virtus according to powers. Virtues are distinguished according to their potencies--for transient or immanent acts. Secondly, this classification of virtues according to transient powers poses a serious difficulty. On the basis of this classification, it might be argued that the optimum of the essential definition can refer to something extrinsic rather than intrinsic. If this is so, it conflicts with numerous Thom-

²⁶De Ver., 14, 3 c; the references to Aristotle within the quotation are the following: Metaphys., VIII, 8, 1050a, 24; Ibid., 1, 1046a, 22; De Cael., I, 11, 281a, 10.

istic texts already cited. However, it does not seem that Saint Thomas meant the optimum to refer to something extrinsic since he points out in his reply to the third difficulty:

Bonum illud ad quod virtus ordinatur, non est accipiendum quasi aliquod objectum alicujus actus; sed illud bonum est ipse actus perfectus, quem virtus elicit.²⁷

Is there, then, a contradiction of the corpus in the reply to the third difficulty? A closer examination of the body of the article reveals that Saint Thomas speaks only of the "virtus deferentis pondera" and "virtus aedificatoris," i.e., of the subject which operates. In the reply to the difficulty, he affirms that virtue belongs to the operator and not to the effect.

The final text to be examined is in the Summa Theologiae; it is the corpus of Article 1 of Question 71 of the Prima-Secundae. The article at issue deals with the question "Utrum Vitium Contrarietur Virtuti?" Saint Thomas answers as follows:

Circa virtutem duo possumus considerare: scilicet ipsam essentiam virtutis; et id ad quod est virtus. In essentia quidem virtutis aliquid considerari potest directe; et aliquid ex consequenti. Directe quidem virtus importat dispositionem quandam alicujus convenienter se habentis secundum modum suae naturae; unde Philosophus dicit . . . quod virtus est dispositio perfecti ad optimum; dico autem perfecti, quod est dispositum secundum naturam. Ex consequenti autem sequitur quod virtus sit bonitas quaedam: in hoc enim consistit uniuscujusque rei bonitas, quod convenienter se habeat secundum modum suae naturae. Id autem ad quod virtus ordinatur, est actus bonus.²⁸

²⁷Ibid., 3 ad 3.

²⁸S.T., I-II, 71, 1 c; the reference to Aristotle within the quotation is the following: Phys., VII, 3, 246b, 23.

According to Aquinas, virtue can be considered according to its essence or its object. He further divides the consideration according to essence into what virtue directly signifies and what result it achieves.

Virtue can be directly defined as a disposition of a subject which is well-disposed according to its nature. In terms of its consequence, virtus can be defined as the dispositio perfecti ad optimum where the perfectum is that which has been disposed according to its nature. The result of virtue is the goodness it conveys as a formal perfection. The object of virtue is a good act.

The significant element in this passage is a direct statement by Saint Thomas in his principal work that virtus is dispositio perfecti ad optimum. The further explanation of perfecti is consistent with the discussion of the term already rendered.²⁹ It should be noted in passing that Saint Thomas here also treats virtue in the context of moral virtue.

In the light of the texts examined in this chapter it is now possible to see what answers have been provided to the questions left by Chapter II for further development and whether any new questions have been raised. An initial set of questions concerned the definition of virtus, dispositio perfecti ad optimum. Two questions were asked. First, is the above definition actually

²⁹Cf. above, pp. 11-12.

central? Since it appears in a treatment concerning the theological, intellectual, and moral virtues, is it perhaps a definition of virtue as a habit rather than virtue in general? The present chapter has confirmed that the definition encompasses all genuine uses of virtus. Three times³⁰ the definition was explicitly stated, twice³¹ as a general definition of virtue. In the Commentary on the Sentences, a clear distinction was drawn between two definitions of virtue, one general and the other particular, and dispositio perfecti ad optimum was given as the definition of virtue in general.³² Elsewhere virtue was defined as a "determination of potency to act"³³ and "what determines an operative potency to specific types of act,"³⁴ both of which definitions are equivalent to dispositio perfecti ad optimum.

The second question about the central definition was this: will a further study of Saint Thomas's writings reveal that he uses the term virtus in connection with potencies which are not operative? Again the answer must be in the affirmative. Aquinas discussed in two texts³⁵ the virtue of potency for being. In

³⁰In III Sent., 23, 1, 3, sol. 1; S.T., I-II, 2 ad 3; Ibid., 71, 1 c.

³¹In III Sent., 23, 1, 3, sol. 1; S.T., I-II, 71, 1 c.

³²In III Sent., 23, 1, 3, sol. 1.

³³S.T., I-II, 55, 1 c.

³⁴In II Sent., 27, 1, 1 sol.; Ibid., 1 ad 3.

³⁵In III Sent., 23, 1, 3, sol. 1 ad 1; S.T., 55, 2 c.

one³⁶ he explained why it was legitimate to talk about such a virtue. Virtue is that which determines a potency to a single thing, and potency to being is determined to one thing, the act of existence. This type of virtue is virtue only by analogy, since the disposition of potency for existence is not the same as the dispositio of the definition.³⁷

A second set of questions inquired whether the central definition³⁸ and its important terms could be clarified. Each important term has been clarified. Dispositio, as a first act, is a formal perfection; as a second act, it is with the subject potency a principle of operative activity.³⁹ Both notions are necessary. Virtue is a formal determination, not exclusively in the sense of formal cause, but especially in the sense that form is the principle of efficient activity. The meaning of perfecti is

³⁶In III Sent., 23, 1, 3, sol. 1 ad 1.

³⁷Cf. De Vir. in Com., 1 ad 9, where a distinction is drawn between the disposition of matter for act and the disposition which is identical with virtue.

³⁸The central definition dispositio perfecti ad optimum was paraphrased in a Marietti edition as "dispositio complens potentiam ad eliciendum actum bonum." The complens potentiam ad eliciendum actum emphasizes that virtue is what completes the potency enabling it to act as it does. The obvious example is the human intellect. This power by nature is open to all being. To explain specific acts of knowing--why the poet looks at the sun and thinks verse, the chemist looks at the same object and thinks formulas--requires the notion of virtue as habit. Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I-II, ed. De Rubeis, et al. (Turin: Marietti, 1948), p. 241.

³⁹In II Sent., 27, 1, 1 ad 3.

found to be developed in terms of the phrase "secundum naturam."⁴⁰ When the subject power has been perfected by virtue, it has been formally determined in a manner suitable to its nature. In the case of totally active potencies, the virtue is the nature itself; in the case of habituated potencies, the power is enabled to act more fully in accord with its nature. Finally, it has been twice affirmed that optimum is the operative act and not an object.⁴¹

A third set of questions was thus stated: are there usages of virtus not mentioned in the central text? Are the usages of the central text the most important or are there other important usages to be discovered? De Virtutibus in Communi lists three categories: the virtue of totally active potencies, that of purely passive potencies, and that of habituated potencies. Three usages not reducible to these have been uncovered. Besides the virtue of potency to being, already treated, virtue as operative act and virtue as object were encountered. But both were given by Saint Thomas as uses by others, not consistent with his own technical use of the term.⁴² There do, of course, remain other uses of the term virtue in the writings of Aquinas which have not yet appeared. The ensuing chapter will be devoted to their study.

⁴⁰Ibid., 1 sol.; Ibid., 1 ad 3.

⁴¹In III Sent., 23, 1, 3, sol. 1; De Ver., 14, 3 ad 3.

⁴²S.T., I-II, 55, 1 ad 1.

From the examples of virtue used in the texts so far seen, it becomes obvious that two types of virtue are primary in the mind of Aquinas--the natural potencies and the habits. Among Thomistic examples of virtue, purely passive potencies are conspicuous by their absence.

To the classification of virtues given in the central text, three alternatives are offered in the texts seen in this chapter --virtues ordained to being and those ordained to operation,⁴³ virtues ordained to one act and those ordained to many acts,⁴⁴ and virtues ordained to transient operation and those ordained to immanent operation.⁴⁵ The scheme of De Virtutibus in Comuni still seems more adequate. It is more consistent with the essential definition of virtus than the first alternate since it does not include virtus of potency to being, an analogous usage of the term; furthermore it is equally comprehensive as and more extensive than the last two.

The final questions concern the context of the central text. Is there a certain primacy in the mind of Saint Thomas to be attributed to the virtues which are habits? All eight⁴⁶ of the

⁴³In III Sent., 23, 1, 3, sol. 1; S.T., I-II, 55, 2 c.

⁴⁴S.T., I-II, 55, 1 c.

⁴⁵De Ver., 14, 3.

⁴⁶De Ver., 14, 3; In II Eth., 5; In II Sent., 27, 1, 1; In III Sent., 23, 1, 3, sol. 1; Ibid., sol. 3; S.T., I-II, 55, 1; Ibid., 2; Ibid., 71, 1.

texts cited in the course of this chapter are in the context of virtue as a habit. At first flush, then, the answer would seem to be yes. And yet could the evidence be circumstantial? In no place does Saint Thomas explicitly recognize any primacy, logical or metaphysical, for virtue as habit. Suffice it to say here that the conclusion of this study will be that no such primacy should be accorded the virtues which are habits, that there exists a more plausible explanation of the context of these passages. The concluding chapter of the thesis will treat the matter more thoroughly, since the question about primacy of usage can be best answered after all the usages of virtus in the writings of Saint Thomas have been studied.

What, then, are the questions which will guide the discussions in the subsequent chapters? First, there is the question about the context of all the passages concerning virtue in general. Is virtue taken as a habit to be accorded some kind of primacy? This question will be answered in the concluding chapter. Secondly, are there uses of virtue still to be encountered? The following chapter will be devoted to answering this question. Finally, there is the minor question whether there are any other instances in the writings of Saint Thomas of the second category of the central text, the virtues of purely passive potencies.

CHAPTER IV

THE DERIVED USAGES OF VIRTUS IN THE WRITINGS OF SAINT THOMAS

The fourth chapter of this thesis will be devoted to a study of the usages of the term virtus not already mentioned in the prior chapters. With the aid of the lexicons of Schutz¹ and Deferrari-Barry,² nine distinct meanings of the subject term in

1"virtus--a) Kraft, Vermogen, Fahigkeit, d.i. nachstes Princip einer Thatigkeit, synonym mit potentia, potestas und vis; b) personifizierte Kraft, d.i. Kraft im Sinne eines personlichen Wesens; c) Kraft, Macht, Moglichkeit zu einem Sein, synonym mit potentia, der Gegensatz zu actus, und habitus; d) Tuchtigkeit, Tugend, synonym mit bonitas und perfectio; e) Tugend des menschen im Sinne eines habitus, der Gegensatz zu malitia und vitium; f) Kraft, Starke, Macht, synonym mit fortitudo, potentia und vis; g) hochste Krafterleistung, hochste Leistung, synonym mit fortitudo und potentia; h) wunderbare Krafterleistung, Wunder, synonym mit miraculum; i) Sinn, Bedeutung, synonym mit intellectus, ratio, sensus, significatio und vis." Ludwig Schutz, Thomas-Lexikon, 2nd ed. (New York: Musurgia Publishers, n.d.), pp. 852-65 passim.

2"(1) Power, faculty, aptitude, or capacity, the proximate principle of activity, synonym of potentia, potestas, vis, (2) Personified power, i.e. power in the sense of a personal being, (3) Power, might, potentiality in a being, synonym of potentia and potestas, the opposite of actus and habitus, (4) Ability, virtue, synonym of bonitas and perfectio, (5) The virtue of man in the sense of a habitus, the opposite of malitia and vitium, (6) Power, strength, might, synonym of fortitudo, potentia, and vis, (7) The highest feat of strength, the highest accomplishment, synonym of fortitudo and potentia, (8) A wonderful feat of strength, wonder, synonym of miraculum, (9) Sense, meaning, synonym of intellectus, ratio, sensus, significatio, and vis." Roy J. Deferrari & Sister M. Inviolata Barry, C.D.P., A Lexicon of Saint Thomas Aquinas, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1948), p. 1159.

the writings of Saint Thomas can be listed: (1) proximate principle of activity; (2) personified power; (3) power or potency (as opposed to act or habit); (4) goodness; (5) good habit as opposed to vice); (6) strength; (7) highest feat of strength; (8) the miraculous; (9) meaning. The first, fourth, and fifth have already been encountered and discussed (the texts cited for number (4), "goodness," being passages in which Aquinas explains that virtue can be defined as "perfectio potentiae"). There remain then six meanings still to be treated. The order of treatment will be the following: first, the personified powers or angels will be discussed in conjunction with a closely allied meaning, miracle. Secondly, the use of virtue as power will be examined; this meaning encompasses three familiar usages--the presence of elements in a compound, the relationship of conclusions to their premises, and the influence of a principal cause on its instrument. Thirdly, some miscellaneous employments of the term--virtue signifying meaning and strength, the latter of which includes the use of virtue in regard to cause and effect--will be treated. Finally, virtus as limit or highest feat of strength will be investigated.

In the writings of Saint Thomas virtus frequently is a synonym for angel. Although the term is most often applied to a particular order, it can refer to all angels:

Virtus autem dupliciter accipi potest. Uno modo, communiter, secundum quod est media inter essentiam et operationem: et sic omnes caelestes spiritus nominantur caelestes virtu-

tes, sicut et caelestes essentiae. --Alio modo, secundum quod importat quendam excessum fortitudinis: et sic est proprium nomen ordinis.³

There is a general sense in which all angels are properly called virtues. They are a middle ground between essence and operation; a conjecture by the author of the thesis is that the probable meaning of this phrase is that angels mediate between the divine plan and its application to particular effects. This notion of virtue as a mean between essence and operation is similar to the use of the term virtue for a habit which mediates between the essence of a faculty and its operation.

Virtus, however, when used to signify an angel, more commonly refers to a specific order within a hierarchy. The reason for the usage given in the text cited above is that of pseudo-Dionysius.⁴ In more ample discussions of virtue applied to a particular order of angels, Saint Thomas explains more fully why he believes the order is appropriately named.

Virtus can signify either of two orders. The one specified depends on the scheme employed--whether it is that of pseudo-Dionysius or that of Gregory the Great. For the former, the middle order of the second hierarchy merited the title Virtutes; for the latter, the same title belonged to the first order of the third

³S.T., I, 108, 5, ad 1.

⁴"Unde Dionysius dicit quod nomen Virtutum significat quendam virilem et inconcussam fortitudinem" Ibid. The reference to pseudo-Dionysius within the quotation is: M.G., 3, pp. 205ff.

hierarchy. Some background will be necessary on how the various orders of angels were named. According to pseudo-Dionysius,⁵ there were three hierarchies of angelic spirits. Since angels are spiritual beings, each hierarchy had two specific tasks, one intellectual, the other volitional.⁶ The first hierarchy contemplated the universe in the essence of God and then considered the end of creation. The second order contemplated creation in its universal causes and cared for the general disposition of its implementation. The third order understood creation in terms of the creatures themselves and carried out the details of the divine plan.

For pseudo-Dionysius, the virtues belonged to the second hierarchy.⁷ For this group, the general disposition of creation

⁵"Primo igitur videamus rationem assignationis Dionysii. In qua considerandum est quod sicut supra dictum est, prima hierarchia accipit rationes rerum in ipso Deo; secunda vero in causis universalibus; tertia vero secundum determinationem ad speciales effectus. Et quia Deus est finis non solum angelicorum ministeriorum sed etiam totius creaturae, ad primam hierarchiam pertinet consideratio finis; ad mediam vero dispositio universalis de agendis; ad ultimam autem applicatio dispositionis ad effectum, quae est operis executio; haec enim tria manifestum est in qualibet operatione inveniri." Ibid., 6 c.

⁶"Dionysius exponit ordinum nomina secundum convenientiam ad spirituales perfectiones eorum." Ibid., 5 c. The reference to pseudo-Dionysius within the quotation is: M.G., 3, pp. 205ff.

⁷"Ad gubernationis autem rationem tria pertinent. Quorum primum est definitio eorum quae agenda sunt: quod est proprium Dominationum. Secundum autem est praebere facultatem ad implendum: quod pertinet ad Virtutes. Tertium autem est ordinare qualiter ea quae praecepta vel definita sunt, impleri possint, ut aliqui exequantur: et hoc pertinet ad Potestates." Ibid., 6 c.

entailed three duties: (1) to determine what had to be done; (2) to present a faculty ready to execute the task; (3) to designate how the divine decrees were to be executed. The second duty, "praebere facultatem ad implendum," was the special property of the Virtues. This use of virtus has its basis in the essential meaning of the term. Virtus is a formal determination to operation; it indicates that the power is fully prepared to act. The purpose of the heavenly Virtutes is similar. They had to provide a power ready to carry out the divine precepts.

According to Gregory the Great, who named the angels according to their ministries,⁸ virtus more properly described the first order of the third hierarchy.⁹ In the execution of the divine plan, it was their ministry to perform the miraculous. In the Compendium Theologiae, Saint Thomas amplifies why Gregory can legitimately use virtus to describe this order:

Supremus autem hujus hierarchiae ordo secundum Gregorium . . . Virtutes dicuntur ex eo quod ea quae sunt supra naturam operantur, in argumentum eorum quae nobis supra rationem nuntiantur: unde ad virtutes pertinere dicitur miracula facere.¹⁰

In the Gregorian scheme the Virtues are the angels who operate

⁸"Gregorius vero, in expositione horum nominum, magis attendere videtur exteriora ministeria." Ibid., 5 c. The reference to Gregory within the quotation is: M.L., 76, 1250, 1251c-d.

⁹"Post quas sunt Virtutes, quae habent potestatem super corporalem naturam in operatione miraculorum." Ibid., 6 c. The reference to Gregory is the same as in the previous citation.

¹⁰Comp. Theol., I, 126. The reference to Gregory is the same as in the previous citations.

over and above nature. They perform miracles. This usage is based on a similarity to virtue as habit. A power which is by nature open to all being is by habit determined to specific modes of operation. Thus habit is something over and above the nature of the power. Since miracles require a power which is capable of what is over and above the natural, the working of miracles is attributed to the Virtues.

In this context it will be suitable to discuss an allied usage of virtus, the eighth sense listed above, as synonymous with miracle. Saint Thomas tells us that a miracle is "*aliquid excedens facultatem naturae. Et secundum hoc, miracula dicuntur virtutes.*"¹¹ Miracles exceed the capability of nature. Thus they are called virtues. Three explanations can be proffered for this use of virtus. First, the phrase "*excedens facultatem naturae*" indicates a similarity to virtue as habit; habit is something over and above the nature of a power; so is a miracle. Secondly, this may be a case where the name of the operant, the angelic Virtue, has been attributed to the operation, the miracle. Finally, virtus was used in the thirteenth century as a synonym for miraculum.¹² Since the usage is infrequent in the works of Saint Thomas, it would be difficult to discern which of the above reasons was Saint Thomas's for using the term.

¹¹S.T., II-II, 178, 1, ad 3.

¹²J.H. Baxter & Charles Johnson, Medieval Latin Word-List, (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 458.

Besides virtue signifying angel and miracle, a common usage of the term in Thomistic writings is virtue as power or potency, the third sense distinguished above. This usage takes three forms. The first concerns the presence of elements in a compound. These are said to be present virtually (virtute). In one text¹³ Saint Thomas considers three opinions how elements exist in a compound. First, he considers the opinion of Avicenna.¹⁴ The Arab philosopher maintained that the substantial forms of the elements are actually present in the compound; each substantial form is subordinate to the form of the compound while actuating a separate portion of the prime matter. Saint Thomas rejects this opinion. He insists that, if the substantial forms are actually present, and each actuates its own portion of the matter, no compound exists, but only a conglomeration of separate elements. The next opinion is that of Averroes.¹⁵ According to the Commentator, the

¹³S.T., I, 76, 4, ad 4.

¹⁴"Avicenna posuit formas substantiales elementorum integras remanere in mixto: mixtionem autem fieri secundum quod contrariae qualitates elementorum reducuntur ad medium.--Sed hoc est impossibile. Quia diversae formae elementorum non possunt esse nisi in diversis partibus materiae; ad quarum diversitatem oportet intelligi dimensiones, sine quibus materia divisibilis esse non potest. Materia autem dimensionibus subjecta non invenitur nisi in corpore. Diversa autem corpora non possunt esse in eodem loco. Unde sequitur quod elementa sint in mixto distincta secundum situm. Et ita non erit vera mixtio, quae est secundum totum: sed mixtio ad sensum, quae est secundum minima juxta se posita." Ibid.

¹⁵"Averroes autem posuit, in III de Caelo, quod formae elementorum, propter sui imperfectionem, sunt mediae inter formas accidentales et substantiales; et ideo recipiunt magis et minus; et ideo remittuntur in mixtione et ad medium reducuntur, et con-

forms of elements are present in a manner midway between substantial and accidental form; the substantial forms of the elements are gradually diminished until they merge into the one substantial form of the compound. Saint Thomas rejects this opinion on two counts. First, there is no mean between substance and accident. Secondly, substantial existence cannot be reduced; existence admits only of being and non-being. Finally Saint Thomas states the opinion of Aristotle:

Et ideo dicendum est, secundum Philosophum in I de Generat., quod formae elementorum manent in mixto non actu, sed virtute. Manent enim qualitates propriae elementorum licet remissae, in quibus est virtus formarum elementarium. Et hujusmodi qualitas mixtionis est propria dispositio ad formam substantialem corporis mixti, puta formam lapidis, vel animae cujuscumque.¹⁶

The forms of elements are present virtually, not actually, in a compound. What does this mean? First, the properties of the elements are truly present although in a diminished manner. The properties of the compound are determined by the properties of its composing elements. These properties can be explained only in terms of the virtus of the elements in their free state, i.e., they are the natural outpourings of the substantial form which is

flatur ex eis una forma.--Sed hoc est etiam magis impossibile. Nam esse substantiale cujuslibet rei in indivisibili consistit; et omnis additio et subtractio variat speciem, sicut in numeris, ut dicitur in VIII Metaphys. Unde impossibile est quod forma substantialis quaecumque recipiat magis et minus.--Nec minus est impossibile aliquid esse medium inter substantiam et accidens." Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid. The reference to Aristotle within the quotation is De Generat. et Corrupt., I, 10, 327b, 29-31.

disposed to operate in specific ways. Although the substantial forms cease to exist in the compound, the dispositions remain.

Aquinas elsewhere explains in more detail the nature of this virtual presence:

Considerandum est igitur quod qualitates activae et passivae elementorum contrariae sunt ad invicem et magis et minus recipiunt. Ex contrariis autem qualitatibus quae recipiunt magis et minus constitui potest media qualitas quae sapiat utriusque extremi naturam, sicut pallidum inter album et nigrum, et tepidum inter calidum et frigidum. Sic igitur, remissis excellentiis qualitatum elementarium, constituitur ex his quaedam qualitas media quae est propria qualitas corporis mixti, differens tamen in diversis secundum diversam mixtionis proportionem; et haec quidem qualitas est propria dispositio ad formam corporis mixti, sicut qualitas simplex ad formam corporis simplicis. Sicut igitur extrema inveniuntur in medio, quod participat naturam utriusque; sic qualitates simplicium corporum inveniuntur in propria qualitate corporis mixti. Qualitas autem simplicis corporis est quidem aliud a forma substantiali ipsius; agit tamen in virtute formae substantialis, alioquin calor calefaceret tantum; non autem per ejus actionem forma substantialis educeretur in actum, cum nihil agat ultra suam speciem.

Sic igitur virtutes formarum substantialium simplicium corporum in corporibus mixtis salvantur. Sunt igitur formae elementorum in corporibus mixtis non quidem actu, sed virtute; et hoc est quod dicit Aristoteles in primo de Gener. 'Non manent igitur elementa in mixto actu ut corpus et album, nec corrumpuntur nec alterum nec ambo: salvatur enim virtus eorum.'¹⁷

Again the discussion is in terms of the properties of the elements in a free state and those of the compound. The properties of the compound are not identical with those of the elements in a free state; yet they are determined by the properties of the elements. The properties of the elements are not actually present in the

¹⁷De Mixt. Elem., 5; the reference to Aristotle is the same as in the previous citation.

compound since they undergo alterations; yet they affect the properties of the compound. As a consequence, some middle ground must be sought for explanation; this middle ground is the virtual presence of elements in a compound.

The key phrase for understanding in what this virtual presence consists is "*virtutes formarum substantialium simplicium corporum in corporibus mixtis salvantur.*" The dispositions of the substantial forms for their proper operations are still present. The substantial form is not present, but its virtus or determination to proper act remains.

An example of virtual presence in the writings of Saint Thomas is the inclusion of the principle of sensation in man's rational soul.¹⁸ Sensation is truly present in man--men really see, hear, etc.--although in a modified form; i.e., sensation is ordered to intellection in human activity. Thus the sensitive is said to be virtually present--all the proper operations are evident: seeing, hearing, etc., but in a modified form. The dispositions for certain acts remain even though they emanate from a rational soul. The sensitive principle is virtually present, i.e., the presence of its power is evident from the operations proper to it.

This usage of virtus is close to the essential definition. Since the properties of the compound are determined by the proper-

¹⁸S.T., I, 76, 3, ad 4.

ties of the elements, the elements are said to be virtually present. Although the substantial forms of the elements no longer exist, their determinations to specific operations remain. This condition is described as the virtual presence of elements in the compound.

Another usage of virtue as power is the presence of conclusions in principles. About this phenomenon, Saint Thomas says:

Unde quando aliqua multa virtute continetur in aliquo uno, dicuntur esse in illo implicite, sicut conclusiones in principiis. Explicite autem in aliquo continentur quod in eo actu existit: unde ille qui cognoscit aliqua principia universalialia habet implicitam cognitionem de omnibus conclusionibus particularibus: qui autem conclusiones actu considerat, dicitur ea explicite cognoscere.¹⁹

A man who understands the universal principles of a science has implicit knowledge of conclusions. When he draws the necessary conclusions, he has explicit knowledge. But before he draws the conclusions, how are they contained in the principles? Saint Thomas answers that conclusions are virtually present in the principles from which they are drawn.

What is the nature of this virtual presence? An example from contemporary mathematics will illustrate what is meant. A mathematician, who thoroughly understands the definitions of real, imaginary, and complex numbers, the totality of finite numbers, can draw the conclusion that all finite numbers are complex.²⁰

¹⁹De Ver., 14, 11 c.

²⁰A complex number is a number which can be written in the form $a + bi$. If a is equal to zero, then we have an imaginary

How was the conclusion present in the three definitions? Certainly not in act since the definition of complex numbers does not state anything about these numbers' including the other two. Nor is the conclusion there in pure potency: given the three definitions, the most logical conclusion is that the class complex includes the other two. As a consequence, a sort of middle ground must be sought. This middle ground is virtual presence. The conclusion is present in the power or virtue of thorough understanding of the definitions to induce the intellect to make the proper inference.

Conclusions are also present in first principles:

In quibus [scientiis speculativis] conclusiones virtute continentur in primis principiis: unde qui perfecte cognosceret principia secundum totam suam virtutem, non opus haberet ut ei conclusiones seorsum proponeretur. Sed quia non omnes qui cognoscunt principia sufficiunt considerare quidquid in principiis virtute continetur, necesse est propter eos ut in scientiis ex principiis conclusiones deducantur.²¹

In speculative sciences, conclusions are virtually present in the first principles. The man who knows first principles in the fullness of their power does not have to draw conclusions.

An example from the experience of the author of the thesis will again illustrate what is meant. In the speculative science,

number. If b is equal to zero, then we have a real number. If neither a nor b is equal to zero, then we have a complex number which is neither real nor imaginary. As a consequence, complex number is inclusive of both real and imaginary number.

²¹S.T., II-II, 44, 2 c.

philosophy, a first principle is "Act is not limited except by the potency in which it is received." The philosopher who fully understands this principle can draw several conclusions: pure act must be totally unlimited; given the difference in levels of being, e.g., plants, beasts, men, there must be grades of dependence of the actual principle on the potential; in all limited beings, there must be some distinction between potency and act. The philosopher, who adequately understands what act, limit, and potency mean, can readily draw the above conclusions. Yet how are the conclusions present in the principle? The man who thoroughly understands the principle has the power to draw the conclusions. In the understanding of the principle, there is a disposition or determination to the conclusions. In this the virtue consists. The understanding of the principles is a first act from which emanates a second act, the drawing of the conclusions.

A final instance of virtus as power is the presence of a principal cause in the instrument. Saint Thomas explains the nature of this virtual presence in the third part of the Summa in reply to a difficulty:

Instrumentum habet duas actiones: unam instrumentalem, secundum quam operatur non in virtute propria, sed in virtute principalis agentis; aliam autem habet actionem propriam, quae competit sibi secundum propriam formam; sicut securi competit scindere ratione suae acuitatis, facere autem lectum inquantum est instrumentum artis.²²

In this passage the action of an instrument which proceeds from

²²S.T., III, 62, 1, ad 2.

its own substantial form and that which proceeds from a power of external source are contrasted. A typewriter, for instance, is capable of itself not even of making certain impressions on paper. Under the influence of a principal cause, however, it can compose a thesis. When the typewriter is printing a thesis, something is present over and above what it naturally possesses. This something is the virtual presence of the principal cause. The principal agent is not actually present; the author of the thesis is not a typewriter. Yet the agent is somehow there; he is virtually present by his power moving the typewriter to type the appropriate words.

In a second text Saint Thomas amplifies this idea:

Alio modo aliquid operatur ad effectum aliquem instrumenta-liter, quod quidem non operatur ad effectum per formam sibi inhaerentem, sed solum in quantum est motum a per se agente. Haec enim est ratio instrumenti, in quantum est instrumentum, ut moveat motum; unde sicut se habet forma completa ad per se agentem, ita se habet motus quo movetur a principali agente, ad instrumentum, sicut serra operatur ad scamnum. Quamvis enim serra habeat aliquam actionem quae sibi competit secundum propriam formam, ut dividere, tamen aliquam effectum habet qui sibi non competit nisi in quantum est mota ab artifice, scilicet facere rectam incisionem, et convenientem formae artis; et sic instrumentum habet duas operationes: unam quae competit ei secundum formam propriam; aliam quae competit ei secundum quod est motum a per se agente, quae transcendit virtutem propriae formae.²³

The essence of an instrument, Saint Thomas explains, is that it is moved and moves simultaneously. A knife, for example, by nature is a tool for cutting; in the hands of a surgeon, however,

²³De Ver., 27, 4 c.

it becomes an instrument for making a delicate incision in the human anatomy. Thus the surgical knife possesses two aspects in its performance. The first aspect is the cutting which is natural to it; the second is the excising diseased tissue, which belongs to it only because it is moved by the principal cause. The instrument acts by reason of both its own power and that of the principal cause. This latter power is over and beyond what the instrument naturally possesses. Thus it has a virtue--a disposition placed in the instrument by the principal cause whereby it achieves something beyond what it is ordained to do by nature.²⁴

There are several miscellaneous usages of virtus by Saint Thomas. First, effects are present in their causes virtually: "Hoc autem est proprium Dei, ut sua essentia sit immaterialiter comprehensiva omnium, prout effectus virtute praeexistunt in causa."²⁵ The cause can also be virtually present in the effect: "Aliquis actus dicitur durare dupliciter: aut secundum essentiam; aut secundum virtutem sive effectum suum" ²⁶ The ensuing illustration is that of a man throwing a rock. While he is actually throwing, the act endures in its essence; after the rock

²⁴"Being moved qua instrument, however, is precisely that formality of the creature action whereby it transcends its own proper capabilities." Francis X. Meehan, Efficient Causality in Aristotle and Saint Thomas (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1940), p. 299.

²⁵S.T., I, 84, 2 c.

²⁶In IV Sent., 15, 4, 2, sol. 3.

leaves the man's hand, the act has duration of virtue or effect. Finally, virtus is occasionally used to signify meaning: "'Spiritus Sanctus' . . . quantum ad virtutem vocabulorum . . . convenit toti Trinitati"27 Saint Thomas is answering an objection that the term Holy Spirit should not be applied to the third person, but to the entire Trinity. He answers that if we attend only to the meaning of the words--"ad virtutem vocabulorum"--then Holy Spirit may refer to the entire Trinity.

Virtue, as signifying the presence of an effect in its cause, as synonomous with effect, and as indicating meaning, will now be analyzed. An effect is virtually present in its cause in the sense that, although it does not yet actually exist, it can come into existence through the cause; there already exists in the cause a determined relationship between the cause and the effect that can be produced. The cause likewise perdures according to a virtual presence in its effect; that is, its efficient causality remains operative after its causal operation has ceased. The activity of the effect is not totally intelligible except in terms of the cause; thus a determined relationship exists between the effect and its cause, and for this reason virtus can occasionally be a synonym for effect. Finally, the meaning of a word may be called its virtue; the vocable has the power to provoke meaning. Because meaning can be inferred from the word, a definite

27In I Sent., 10, 1, 4, ad 1.

relationship can be ascertained between a word and its meaning, and an instance of virtue is in evidence.

Finally, virtue can be a synonym for peak of power. This usage is summarized in the familiar definition of virtus as "ultimum in re de potentia." Saint Thomas explains the meaning of this usage in the following passage:

Ad primi autem manifestationem dicit quod, si contingat aliquam rem posse in aliquid magnum, puta quoad aliquis homo ambulet per centum stadia, aut possit levare aliquod magnum pondus, semper determinamus sive denominamus ejus potentiam per respectum ad plurimum in quod potest; sicut dicimus potentiam hujus hominis esse quod potest levare pondus centum talentorum, aut quod potest ire per spatium centum stadiorum, quamvis possit omnes partes infra istam quantitatem contentas, siquidem potest in id quod superabundat

Sic igitur patet quod ille qui potest in ea quae excellent, necesse est quod possit etiam in ea quae sunt infra; puta si aliquis potest portare centum talenta, poterit etiam portare duo, et si potest ire per centum stadia, potest ire per duo: sed tamen virtus rei non attribuitur nisi excellentiae, idest, secundum id attenditur virtus rei, quod est excellentissimum omnium eorum in quae potest.

Et hoc est quod dicitur in alia translatione, virtus est ultimum potentiae, quia scilicet virtus rei determinatur secundum ultimum in quod potest. Et hoc etiam habet locum in virtutibus animae: dicitur enim virtus humana, per quam homo potest in id quod est excellentissimum in operibus humanis, scilicet in opere quod est secundum rationem.²⁸

The notion of virtus as signifying the peak of a thing's power has its source in the fact that potentiality is described in terms of maximums and minimums. Thus, if a man is able to lift a hundred pound weight, his potential is determined as the capacity of lifting one hundred, and not fifty pounds even though the latter

²⁸In I De Cael. et Mund., 25, n. 249.

is certainly true. Capability is designated in terms of the maximum a person can accomplish; in other words, capability is designated in terms of its acme.

This notion of virtus as peak of power, however, is not a usage in accord with the essential meaning of the term. In the central text, Saint Thomas explains this usage:

Illa definitio Philosophi potest dupliciter intelligi. Uno modo materialiter, ut per virtutem intelligamus id in quod virtus potest, quod est ultimum inter ea in quae potentia potest; sicut virtus ejus qui potest, ferre centum libras, est in eo in quantum potest ferre centum libras non in quantum ferre potest sexaginta. Alio modo potest intelligi essentialiter; et sic virtus dicitur ultimum potentiae, quia designat potentiae complementum; sive id per quod potentia completur, sit aliud a potentia, sive non.²⁹

"Ultimum in re de potentia" can be understood in two ways. First, it can signify the peak of the capability of the virtue. A man who can carry a certain weight is said to be able to carry that, and not a lesser weight, even though undoubtedly he could carry the lighter amount. Capability is described in terms of maximum or limit. The phrase, "ultimum in re de potentia," corresponds to the essential meaning of virtus only if it is synonymous with completion of a potency; but this meaning of the phrase is not being discussed here.

The purpose in the first section of the conclusion to the present chapter will be to clarify and schematize the meanings of virtus examined throughout the preceding pages of this chapter.

²⁹De Vir. in Com., 1, ad 6.

The principal observation must be that the present chapter deals with a notion of virtue somewhat different from that studied in Chapters Two and Three. Chapter Four examines instances of virtus which are translations from the Greek δύναμις while the previous two chapters were concerned with usages which had their origin in the word ἀρετή. The term δύναμις, as translated by virtus, had two meanings: (1) active potency, i.e., the ability to do; (2) passive potency, i.e., an undergoing, the capability of coming into actuality. Translation according to the first meaning was a more frequent occurrence as subsequent analysis will show.

The first section of the summary will discuss the meanings of virtus which are translations of δύναμις. The second part will inquire whether the usages of virtus-δύναμις are in any way related to the uses of virtus-ἀρετή and therefore to the definition of virtue heretofore described as central.

The usages of virtus which translate δύναμις can roughly be classified in four categories. The first category is that of the angels. Here the notion of active potency predominates. Angels are denominated virtues because they have power to perform operations. Angels are called virtues in three senses, one general and two particular. In the general sense, they are virtues because they operate as intermediaries between God and His universe.³⁰ According to pseudo-Dionysius, a particular order of

³⁰S.T., I, 108, 5, ad 1.

angels can be called the Virtues since their function is to provide a capacity ready to operate.³¹ According to Gregory the Great, another order deserves the name virtus because it has the task of working miracles.³²

A second category of virtus as dúvauis includes the various virtual presences. There are, in general, three such presences, the first two of which combine both the active and passive meanings of dúvauis, and a final one which specifies only the active sense. The first type of virtual presence is that of elements in a compound.³³ In this type, virtus is discernible both in an active sense (the compound acts in ways appropriate to the elements) and in a passive sense (the elements can be educed from the potency of the matter of the compound). Secondly, a conclusion is virtually present in the premises of a syllogism³⁴: from the viewpoint of the conclusion, it does not yet actually exist, but it can; from the viewpoint of the premises, they are inherently capable of making the conclusion become actual. Finally, the presence of a principal cause in its instrument³⁵ is an instance of active potency only: the use of the instrument becomes

³¹S.T., I, 108; Comp. Theol., I, 126.

³²Ibid.

³³De Mixt. Elem., 5; S.T., I, 76, 4, ad 4.

³⁴De Ver., 14, 11 c; S.T., II-II, 44, 2 c.

³⁵De Ver., 27, 4 c; S.T., III, 62, 1, ad 2.

a part of the action of the principal cause; i.e., the principal's ability is active in the instrument and therefore virtually present.

A number of usages of virtus as divinus must be categorized as miscellaneous. The first pair of such usages bears a similarity to the virtual presence of a conclusion in its premises. An effect is present in its cause³⁶ according to a passive potency: it does not actually exist, but can come to exist through the cause. A cause remains present in its effect³⁷ according to its active potency: it can and does make the being of the effect actual. Two other miscellaneous usages of virtus as divinus are virtue as indicative of meaning³⁸ and as synonomous with miracle.³⁹ Both uses translate divinus in regard to passive potency. Virtue is equivalent to meaning inasmuch as a meaning can be drawn out of a word. Virtue likewise can signify miraculous power insofar as a miraculous work is present in a supernatural power and therefore can come to be through that power.

Finally, the category of virtus as the peak of potency⁴⁰

³⁶S.T., I, 84, 2 c.

³⁷In IV Sent., 15, 4, 2, sol. 3.

³⁸In I Sent., 10, 1, 4, ad 1; S.T., I, 29, 4 c; Ibid., 36, 1, ad 1.

³⁹S.T., II-II, 178, 1, ad 3.

⁴⁰In I De Cael. et Mund., 25, n. 249; Ibid., nn. 251-2; In I Sent., 24, 2, 1, ad 1.

must be considered. Virtue as peak of power indicates the overall capability of an active potency.

In almost all the usages of virtus as δύναμις, virtue connotes active potency, the ability to do; in a few, undergoing or passive potency is discernible. In terms of causality, the type of cause in question for the usages discussed in the present chapter is efficient cause. How then are these usages related to those discussed in Chapters Two and Three where the notion of formal causality predominated? The second half of the summary will examine whether any relationship exists,

In Chapters Two and Three, virtus was dispositio perfecti ad optimum. The dispositio is a formal determination; it is a first act. Perfecti indicates that which possesses this formal disposition, an operative potency. Optimum finally indicates formal disposition to proper activity or second act. Furthermore the most common usage of virtus by Saint Thomas is virtue as a habit. A habit, it will be recalled, is something over and above the nature of the faculty. Human faculties are open to all being; a habit supplements these faculties and specializes their determination to being. Thus from the general notion of virtus and its most common usage, two inferences can be made: (1) virtue is a determination to second act; (2) virtue frequently is something over and beyond the nature of a power. On the basis of these inferences the secondary usages are derived.

Virtus can be applied to angels since any angel is an inter-

mediate between essence and operation.⁴¹ Virtue as a habit is something which is superadded to the essence of the subject power and with it determines operation. The term can also be applied to two orders of angels. It can be applied to one order since its task is to provide a capability ready to act.⁴² The presence of virtue always indicates that the power is fully determined and consequently prepared to act. It can be applied to a second order since they have the power of working miracles.⁴³ They have a power over and beyond nature.

It is legitimate to speak of three types of virtual presence. Elements are virtually present in a compound; the elements determine the properties and modes of operation of the compound.⁴⁴ Thus the forms of the elements determine the second acts of the compound although in a modified form. Conclusions are virtually present in the principles from which they are drawn; understanding of the principles begets drawing of the conclusions.⁴⁵ In the understanding of the principles is the determination to a second act (here in a logical, not an ontological sense), the drawing of the conclusion. Finally, a principal cause is virtu-

⁴¹S.T., I, 108, 5, ad 1.

⁴²According to the scheme of pseudo-Dionysius. S.T., I, 108; Comp. Theol., I, 126.

⁴³According to the scheme of Gregory. Ibid.

⁴⁴De Mixt. Elem., 5; S.T., I, 76, 4, ad 4.

⁴⁵De Ver., 14, 11 c; S.T., II-II, 44, 2 c.

ally present in the instrument.⁴⁶ The instrument possesses a capability over and above what is natural to it; this power is the virtual presence of the principal cause.

There are numerous miscellaneous meanings of virtus: it can indicate the presence of an effect in a cause⁴⁷ and be synonymous with effect,⁴⁸ meaning,⁴⁹ or miracle.⁵⁰ The explanation how these usages are related to the definition proposed as central is at best hypothetical since Saint Thomas does not provide any explicit analyses of these instances. In the instances of an effect in its cause and of a cause in its effect, a determined relationship or disposition does exist between the two terms of the operation; the effect, prior to its being actual, is present in its cause in a state that exceeds pure potentiality, and the cause perdures in its effect in a manner that is real, yet no longer identifiable with the actual exercise of its efficient causality. Thus a disposition of a first act (cause) to its second act (effect) is discoverable, but this relationship of first to second act is not in accord with the appropriate usage of the two terms; virtue, however, may be said to be vindicated

⁴⁶De Ver., 27, 4 c; S.T., III, 62, 1, ad 2.

⁴⁷S.T., I, 84, 2 c.

⁴⁸In IV Sent., 15, 4, 2, sol. 3.

⁴⁹In I Sent., 10, 1, 4, ad 1; S.T., I, 29, 4 c; Ibid., 36, 1, ad 1.

⁵⁰S.T., II-II, 178, 1, ad 3.

in an analogous sense. Meaning and virtue can be synonyms. A word possesses a power to convey meaning. This power can be called a virtus since the word as a subject possesses a capacity whereby it produces a second act, its meaning. Again the terms of the central definition are verified in analogous senses. Last of all, a miracle may be called a virtue because it is an occurrence which is over and beyond nature. Habits determine their subject powers over and beyond the natural endowments of the powers. Since miracles, like habits, are over and beyond nature, they are virtues.

Finally, virtus can mean the peak of a thing's power.⁵¹ This usage is acceptable if understood materially⁵²; the maximum or minimum indicates precisely what the virtue of a thing is. This usage, however, does not catch the essential meaning; virtue is a formal determination to operation whether or not the operation works to full capacity or not.

⁵¹In I De Cael. et Mund., 25, n. 249; Ibid., nn. 251-2; In I Sent., 24, 2, 1, ad 1.

⁵²De Vir. in Com., 1, ad 6.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter will be composed of three parts. First, the central definition, dispositio perfecti ad optimum, will be discussed--what the definition means in its entirety and what each individual term signifies. Secondly, an attempt will be made to classify the several usages of virtus. Here attention will be given to the question whether the subject term is predicated analogously, univocally, or equivocally in the writings of Aquinas. Thirdly and finally, the already posed question whether the use of virtue to signify habit has a primacy in the mind of Aquinas will be investigated.

The first conclusion of this study is that dispositio perfecti ad optimum is the essential definition of virtus. It has been translated as "the formal determination of an operative potency to its proper activity."¹ Dispositio is the formal determination. It is a first act relative to a second; virtue is essentially a determination to another act. Yet after careful reflection upon the uses of virtus discussed in the previous chapters, the inevitable conclusion is that dispositio assumes

¹Cf. above, p. 19.

manifold meanings.

This formal determination can be identified with the divine essence. It can also be identified with the nature of finite beings in the instance of natural potencies. It can be a proper accident such as agent intellect; it can be a further determination of an accident such as a habit. It can be identified with the disposition of potency for existence. It can be the determination of an act of understanding premises leading to a further act of concluding. It can likewise be the totality of a personal being's powers as it is in the case of the angelic virtues. The central notion of determination pervades all these instances of virtus; not in all cases, however, is the dispositio a formal determination.

Perfecti indicates the subject of the formal determination; it is usually an operative potency. Again usage provides a wider range of meanings for the term. The subject of virtue can be the all-perfect, the divine essence. It can be a finite nature; it can be an accidental perfection like the agent intellect, the possible intellect, or the will. The perfectum can be a non-operative potency, in the case of the virtus of potency to being. It can also be a substance, as it is in the case of the presence of elements in a compound or of principal cause in an instrument. The perfectum can be an act of understanding; it can be an angel. In all cases the notion of subject is verified; most often the subject is an operative potency.

Finally, virtus is ad optimum. The optimum is the activity proper to the subject; most often it is a second act. Yet optimum can quite properly refer to the operation of God. Also it can indicate the act of existence or the act of living, i.e., first act. It sometimes signifies a miraculous act. Most often, of course, it is a second act: an act of sensing, understanding, willing; an angelic operation; the influence of properties on the operations of a compound. Occasionally it is a single aspect of an operative act, as in the case of principal and instrumental causes. Finally, optimum may be a temporally second act, as it is when it signifies an act of concluding subsequent upon a prior act of understanding. In all cases the notion of activity dominates; usually optimum means second act or operation.

Thus dispositio perfecti ad optimum is the essential definition of virtus. In the fullness of its meaning it signifies "the formal determination of an operative potency for its proper activity." In actual usage, however, virtus often means "the determination of a subject to activity."

A second task to be accomplished in this chapter is the classification of the usages of virtus by Saint Thomas. A distinction can be drawn between primary and secondary usages. The justification for this distinction is twofold. First, the classification of the virtues in the central text is the most comprehensive set of categories offered by Saint Thomas. Secondly, as will be shown, the primary usages more closely adhere to the

meaning of the essential definition of virtus. The primary usages are those from the classification given in the central text. The secondary uses are those which fall outside the above classification.

The primary usages are threefold. There are the virtues of the totally active potencies. Examples of this type are the divine power, the agent intellect, and the natural potencies. A second type are the virtues of the purely passive potencies. Examples are the sense faculties while they are actually being determined by their objects to act. Finally, there are the virtues of habituated potencies. The intellectual and moral virtues are examples of this type.

There are numerous secondary usages. First, there are the virtues of potency to being. Secondly, angels can be called virtues in three senses: all angels when designated under this name are regarded as intermediaries between essence and operation; one order of angels has charge of providing a faculty fully ready to act; another order works miracles. Thirdly, there are several types of virtual presence: elements are virtually contained in compounds; a conclusion is found virtually in its premises; the principal cause is virtually present in its instrument; an effect resides virtually in its cause. Fourthly, a miracle can be called a virtue. Fifthly, virtue can be equated with peak of power. Finally, virtue can be a synonym for meaning or effect.

There are two other meanings which will not be classified

since their usage is rejected by Saint Thomas as improper. Virtue can be synonymous with object or with act.

In this context, it will be suitable to discuss whether virtus is predicated univocally, equivocally, or analogously in the works of Aquinas. It is the conclusion of this study that the term is predicated analogously. In each instance there is both similarity and dissimilarity in the manner in which the term is used.

In the case of the primary usages, they have this in common that in each case virtus is a formal disposition to operation. They differ according to the relation between the determination and its subject. For the totally active potencies, the formal determination and the subject are identified permanently. For sense in act, both the formal determination and the subject are united, but only transiently. Finally, in the case of a habit, the virtue is a perfection superadded to the potency and residing in it. In each case the relationship between determination and subject differs depending on whether they are united, either permanently or transiently, and whether the determination is an abiding disposition of the subject or not. In all cases, the virtue is a formal determination to operation whether this operative act has its origin in God or in another being, living, sensitive, intellectual, or volitional.

Among the secondary usages of virtus, the analogy takes two forms. In the first, the similarity consists in the fact that

the virtue in every instance complies with part of the central definition, usually determination to activity. Among these usages the dissimilarity arises from the fact that either the subject of the virtue is not an operative potency or the activity is not second act. Examples from this category are the virtues of potency to being, angels (in the classification of Saint Gregory the Great), all types of virtual presence, and peak of power. Secondly, the analogy is often based on a similarity to either of the most frequent usages of virtus, as power or habit, even though there might be great dissimilarity in terms of the essential definition. Instances of this category are miracles, angels in general or, according to pseudo-Dionysius, meaning and effect.

Each of the secondary usages then is both similar and dissimilar to the central notion of virtus. Potency to being has a disposition for an activity; but this activity is first act and the subject is not an operative potency. Angels can bear three possible similarities to the central notion: they can mediate between essence and operation as a habit does; they provide a faculty prepared for operation; they can possess the power of working miracles, a power exceeding natural capability (an habituated power exceeds the natural capability). In each case the angelic virtues possess these dissimilarities to the central notion of virtue: the determination represents the adequacy of their powers to operate; and the subject is a nature and not just his operational capabilities. For the elements in a compound or

for the principal cause in an instrument, the virtue is a formal determination to the proper operation of the elements or of the principal agent. Yet in each case, the determination no longer perfects its natural subject but another, the compound or the instrument. The virtual presence of a conclusion in its premises consists in the fact that in the act of understanding the principles there is a determination to a second act, drawing the conclusion. The sequence, however, is logical and not ontological. Likewise the effect resides in its cause inasmuch as the cause has the power to produce the effect and qua cause is a subject determined to the effect; the effect, however, which is the object of the determination, is not the second act of the cause. A miracle bears a resemblance to a habit; it exceeds the capacity of nature. The miracle, however, is not a formal determination to operation, but an effect of the operation. Virtue as a peak of power indicates the maximum determination of a potency; yet peak of power only describes the determination; it does not directly signify it. Meaning and effect bear a likeness to a principal usage of virtus, power. The meaning of a word is its power to evoke understanding; the duration of an act according to its effect is indicative that the power continues even though the act has ceased. Neither usage is a determination of a potency.

Finally, there is the question whether virtue as a habit is to be accorded a certain primacy in the writings of Saint Thomas. There are two reasons that favor such an interpretation. First,

all the texts concerning virtue in general are in the context of virtue as a habit. Secondly, numerous secondary usages have their derivation from the central notion in their similarity to virtue as a habit: they are something over and above the nature of a potency. And yet there are three objections to this primacy for habitual virtue. Even though Saint Thomas always discussed the general notion in connection with this particular type, he never makes any explicit mention of such a primacy. Secondly, there are additional derived usages which have their basis in the general notion of virtus or in their similarity to virtue as power. Finally, there can be no question of a metaphysical primacy to be accorded virtue as a habit because, in line with the rest of his metaphysical thought, Saint Thomas would find the divine virtue as the primary analogate of all other virtues.

How then are the contexts of the central texts to be explained? If an attempt is made to reflect upon the opportunities available to Saint Thomas to discuss virtus in general, perhaps a more suitable explanation of the contexts will evolve. In discussions of the presence of elements in a compound, virtue was an adequate solution to a vexing problem, why the properties of a compound were somewhat similar to the properties of the elements in a free state. The investigation, however, concerned the relation of a compound and its elements. When the virtual presence of a principal cause in its instrument was being treated, the principal focus was on the nature of dual causality. Virtue was

only an apt term to describe the relationship of the two causes. In treatises on angels, virtus was merely a name to be applied to all or to a particular order; the contexts were hardly suitable for discussing virtus in general. Finally, whenever virtue is used as synonymous with the divine power, the agent intellect, the natural potencies, etc., the subject for discussion is not virtus but the reality so named.

In the case of virtue as a habit, however, a different situation prevailed. The term virtus was being used as such. Given the opportunity to discourse on virtue as such, Saint Thomas then proceeds to render an explanation of what virtue in general is. The reason why all the discussions of virtus in general appear in the context of habitual virtue is that virtue as a habit is the only suitable context for discussing the general notion. Wherever else Saint Thomas discussed virtue, the topic of the discussion was not virtue as such; any treatment of the general notion would therefore have been misleading.

A comparison can be drawn between the articles which concern virtue in general and the initial article of De Potentia.² The cited work, like De Virtutibus in Communi, has a deceptive title. De Potentia is a treatise not on potency as such, but on the divine power. The procedure employed, however, is similar to that of the texts on virtue. Before he treats the topic for dis-

²De Pot., 1, 1 c.

cussion, Saint Thomas examines the notion of potentia in general. From the general he proceeds to the particular notion which is the subject of the study. So it is with the discussions of virtue. Aquinas first investigates the general significance of the term even though a particular meaning is properly the matter at hand.

Two further arguments can be adduced in support of the contention that no primacy is to be accorded virtue as a habit. First, virtue in this sense is not the most frequent usage of virtus by Saint Thomas. Schutz in his Thomas-Lexikon catalogued over a hundred different types of uses of virtus as the proximate principle of activity against about fifty different types of virtue in the sense of a habit.³ Secondly, a parallel can be drawn between Saint Thomas's day and our own. If a contemporary philosopher wanted to discuss the general meaning of the term, virtue, he would do so in the context of virtue as opposed to vice, since this meaning is the one commonly associated with the word. As a consequence, the modern would also discuss virtue in general in conjunction with virtue as a habit even though Webster's Dictionary lists several other current meanings of the term.⁵

³Schutz, pp. 852-7 & 859-64.

⁴"VIRTUE 1. pl. One of the orders of angels. 2. Moral practice or action; moral excellence; rectitude; morality. 3. A particular moral excellence; any moral quality conceived as a good; also, such virtues collectively 4. Active quality or power; power adequate to the production of a given effect; potency; efficacy; as, a medicine without virtue; also, a partic-

As a result, it is the conclusion of this study that virtue as a habit has no primacy among the usages by Aquinas of virtus. The context of the general discussions is to be explained in terms of a practical exigency; virtue as a habit was the only suitable occasion for Saint Thomas to discuss virtue in general.

Virtus then in the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas is essentially defined as dispositio perfecti ad optimum. It is directly a formal determination. This formal determination is a perfection of a potency. It is also essentially relative; it is determination to some type of activity. There are primary usages of virtus such as the divine power, the agent intellect, the natural potencies, and habits. There are secondary usages such as the virtue of potency to being, angel, miracle, peak of power, and virtual presence which are less precisely connected with the essential meaning. When the term is used, it is predicated analogously.

ular instance of such virtue; as, the virtue of a given remedy. 5. Manly strength or courage; valor. 6. Excellence or an excellence of any kind; as, to make a virtue of necessity. 7. Chastity; esp., the chastity of women.--in, or by virtue of. Through the force of; by authority of." Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Springfield: C. & C. Merriam Co., 1959), p. 953b.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by David J. Stagaman, S.J. has been read and approved by his director from the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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